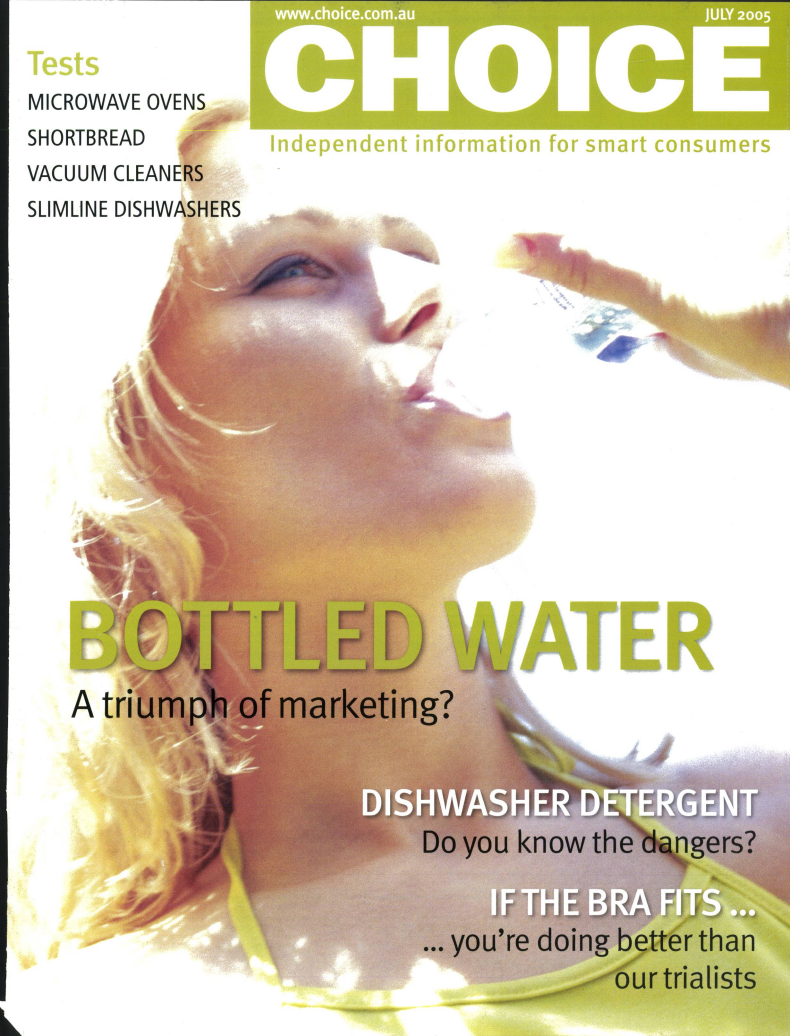
www.choice.com.au JULY 2005

CHOICE

Independent information for smart consumers

Tests

MICROWAVE OVENS
SHORTBREAD
VACUUM CLEANERS
SLIMLINE DISHWASHERS



BOTTLED WATER

A triumph of marketing?

DISHWASHER DETERGENT

Do you know the dangers?

IF THE BRA FITS ...

... you're doing better than our trialists

COMING SOON ...

Espresso machines

Expensive automatic models don't guarantee great tasting coffee at home.

Pet care

Options for keeping your pet happy and healthy while you're away.

Gas cooktops

They look flash, but how do they rate?

Subscribe to CHOICE

PERSONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year $66, two years $123.
COMPANIES/INSTITUTIONS
One year $105, two years $200.
For subscription and renewal enquiries only, call 1800 069 552.

CONTACT US

WRITE to us at CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.
PHONE us on (02) 9577 3399.
FAX us on (02) 9577 3377.
EMAIL us at ausconsumer@choice.com.au

Message in a bottle

Jane Mackenzie, Editor

Our cover story on bottled water (page 8) isn't called *A triumph of marketing* for nothing. On the one hand you have a product that in most places is extremely cheap, very safe and pleasant to drink: tap water. Then along comes bottled water — just plain, with no fizz or flavours — that's no safer, is often indistinguishable in taste from tap water, and costs much more. And yet we buy it by the millions of litres — and dollars — per year.

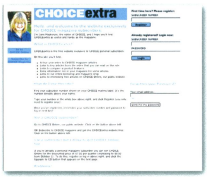
What's more, unless it says 'bottled at source' on the label, chances are the supposed 'spring water' has been transported in bulk. It may have been filtered and chemically treated (usually with ozone). While Europe has strict controls on bottled water and 'spring water' has to be untreated and bottled at its source, there's no such regulation here.

Tap water undergoes treatment and regular testing for bacteria and chemical contaminants. Bottled water isn't allowed to contain harmful bacteria either, and there are specified limits to the amounts of substances like arsenic and heavy metals it can contain. However, there's little or no independent testing. Yet in a quick e-poll we ran on CHOICE Online, 24% of respondents thought bottled water was less likely to contain harmful bacteria. Where on earth do ideas like that come from if not fostered by some of the messages on the labels: *"collected fresh and pure", "free from impurities that you find in tap water..."*?

Sure, there are areas whose tap water doesn't taste good and bottled is better. But most of us are just swallowing the marketing along with the water.

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

www.CHOICEextra.com.au



The free website exclusive to CHOICE magazine personal subscribers, with a four-year index and links to many articles online.

Look out for the ↖ symbol in magazine articles — it indicates there's extra info on CHOICEextra. This month you'll find our interactive 'Compare-a-product' tool to help you choose a dishwasher.

To use this free website you'll need to log in with your subscriber number, which is the number directly above your name on the mailing label that comes with the magazine.

CHOICE SHOPPER best value

All you need is the model name and number you want to buy, the price you want to beat, and your CHOICE subscriber number (from the mailing label with the magazine). CHOICE Shopper is available to personal subscribers only.

Call 1300 360 655

CONTENTS

July 2005

COVER STORY

8 A triumph of marketing?
Is bottled water any healthier for you than water from the tap?
Photo: Photolibrary

REPORTS

12 Can I eat it?
Can you safely eat old leftovers, mouldy foods and other items lurking in your fridge?

20 Food labelling: the seven deadly sins
The tricks manufacturers use to persuade us to buy their products.

28 Child-resistant caps
Dishwasher detergent can be highly caustic but some bottle closures aren't good enough to keep kids out.

34 Choosing an oven
Our buying guide takes you through the choices.

TESTS

15 Bra fitting services
Undercover underwear shoppers put professional bra fitters to the test.

23 Slimline dishwashers
Are they a good alternative if a full-sized model seems too big for your home?

32 Shortbread
CHOICE's Home Testers tasted 19 supermarket varieties.

38 Expensive vacuums
Paying top dollar doesn't guarantee you'll get a top performer.

42 Microwave ovens
Test results for 11 compact models.

REGULARS

4 CHOICE Cuts
7 Your Letters
30 Drivelines: The latest ANCAP car safety results
31 Hip Pocket: Home loans from newsagencies; super fund exit fees
46 Food Bites: Crackdown on juice makers; seafood extender
47 Consumer Bookshelf
49 Recalls and bans
51 CHOICE index: August 2004 — July 2005
52 The Hard Word

PRICE RISE

Due to increasing costs, the price of a CHOICE subscription is going up. The new prices, effective from the August 2005 issue, will be:

- Personal subscribers: quarterly $17.25, one year $69, two years $128.
- Institution/company subscribers: one year $110, two years $210.
- CHOICE plus CHOICE Online: quarterly $26.75.
- Voting membership: $98.70 per year.

If you've subscribed within the last year, the price you pay will be held constant for your first year.

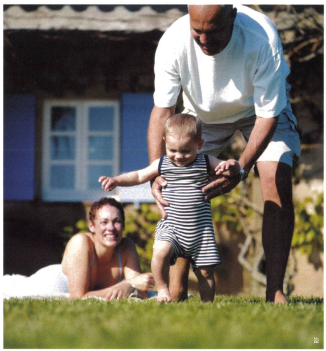
When can I claim my 30% childcare rebate?

Tax time is upon us again, and readers with children in childcare may be wondering when you can start claiming the 30% childcare rebate promised by the government in the lead-up to last October's federal election.

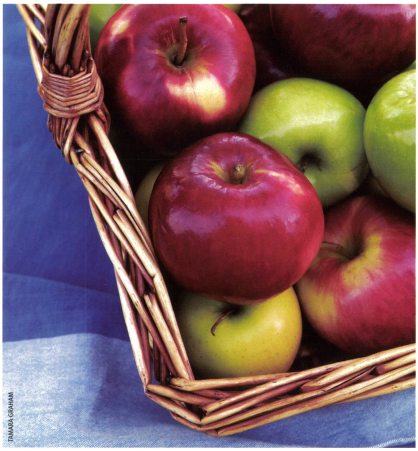
Unfortunately, not for a while yet. In fact claims for the 2004–5 financial year cannot be made until completing your tax return for the 2005–6 financial year. In other words, from when you spent the money you could be waiting up to two years or more for your rebate. While any relief from the burden of childcare expenses is welcome, the long delay between incurring the expense and recovering the rebate doesn't help make childcare more affordable — you don't have the money when you need it most.

The reason for the delay is that it takes a few months after the end of the financial year for data regarding childcare usage, Child Care Benefit entitlement and a family's taxable income to be reconciled. To compensate for the delay, the government has backdated the introduction of the rebate to 1 July 2004, instead of January 2005 as originally planned. So make sure you keep all childcare receipts from July 2004 onwards (or start keeping them now if you haven't). Another change is that the rebate is now capped at $4000 per child.

For more about the rebate, including eligibility requirements, see the Family Assistance Office website (www.familyassist.gov.au) or contact your nearest office on 136 150.



SUPER CHOICE: GOOD AND BAD



TAMARA GRAHAM

Don't feel pressured by the hype surrounding the arrival of super choice from 1 July. The latest issue of our sister magazine, CHOICE *Money & Rights*, recommends you think carefully about the consequences of changing funds and watch out for some unexpected pitfalls.

What is super choice?

The ability to choose the super fund for your employer's compulsory 9% Super Guarantee (SG) contributions is known as fund choice. An estimated 5.2 million workers can expect to receive a form, known as the Standard Choice Form (SCF), from their employer before 29 July 2005 informing them that they have this right.

You should think long and hard about the consequences of leaving your existing fund, especially if you're in a company or public sector fund with low fees and attractive insurance benefits. There's no deadline for exercising your choice so don't rush.

If your employer gives you a SCF, that form will specify which default fund your employer has chosen. The action you take will depend on whether your employer has nominated your existing fund or a new fund as the default.

What to look out for

The June issue of CHOICE *Money & Rights* explains each of the options that's available to you and highlights some traps you could fall into if you don't make careful decisions with your super. For instance, if you don't actively

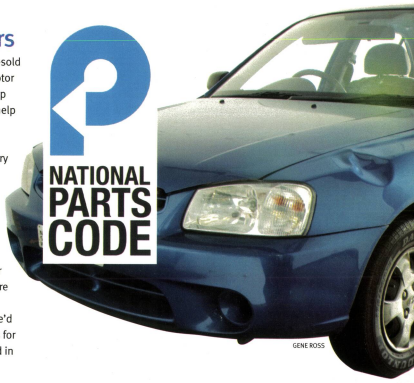
Code of practice for motor wreckers

If stolen cars aren't 'rebirthed' (resprayed and altered so they can be resold with a new identity), they often turn up as spare parts. The National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, which governments and insurers set up some years ago, has been quite successful at promoting measures to help reduce theft. However around 18,000 cars still 'disappear' each year.

To further reduce this statistic, the council has now established a National Parts Code, which seeks to have the car parts recycling industry (also known as motor wreckers) sign on to agreed ethical practices for sourcing and selling used car parts, essentially ensuring they don't trade in stolen parts.

Soon recyclers will start displaying signs that indicate they subscribe to the code, see right. Th sign should assure you that any parts you buy from that recycler can be traced to legitimate sources — they aren't from a stolen car. You can also ask your car repairer whether they intend using used parts in the repair of your car and, if so, to ensure they're only sourced from a code signatory.

CHOICE supports the appropriate use of used parts in car repairs. We'd also like to see this scheme extended to cover the quality of used parts for smash repairs, so that you could be assured your car would be repaired in a safe and durable manner.



GENE ROSS

choose your existing fund on the SCF, your employer's contributions may not continue to be paid into it. If your employer selects a new default fund, that's where your future compulsory payments will go, not to your existing fund.

And even if you decide to choose a different fund to the default one chosen by your employer, in some circumstances your employer can still knock back the fund you choose. A fund may require your employer to enter a participation agreement before it will accept SG payments. If your employer refuses, you'll have to find another fund.

We think this loophole in the new rules could make it very difficult for some employees to exercise their rights under super choice and may force them to accept the employer's default fund even if they don't think it meets their needs.

CHOICE *Money & Rights* is also concerned that fund choice may see more consumers consider starting their own self-managed super fund, even if it's not necessarily the best option for them. Even if you have the $200,000 or more in your account that will justify the set-up and ongoing costs of a self-managed fund, do you have the time and the commitment to run your own fund?

For more information about money matters, subscribe to CHOICE *Money & Rights* by calling 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.

Need help choosing a super fund?

To make comparing funds easier, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) has launched a new superannuation calculator on its consumer website (www.fido.gov.au).

If you're interested in switching funds, you can use the calculator to compare the costs of two funds side by side, and see the results in easy-to-read graphs. For a more complete picture, you can also put in yearly insurance premiums and take termination fees into account. Or you can check the effect of topping up your super with your own contributions (after-tax or salary sacrifice) or through government co-contributions, if you're eligible.

For more information about superannuation fund choice, go to www.superchoice.gov.au.

UPDATE

COTS

CHOICE, June 2005

In our report on the **STOKKE Sleepi** (*Choice Cuts*, page 6), we noted this cot didn't comply with the Australian standard, due to some gaps between bars being less than the required 50 mm minimum, and some holes creating traps for small fingers.

The distributor, Scandinavian Baby, has advised that a new model will be available from July 1, with screw plugs for the small holes and 60 mm gaps between bars.

CORRECTION

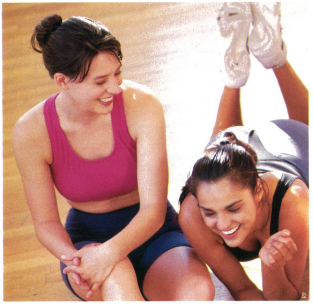
LAUNDRY DETERGENTS

CHOICE, May 2005

In the table on page 13, **AMWAY SA8 Laundry Concentrate** should have a tick in the 'Contains enzymes' column.

Period pain panacea?

A randomised study of almost 300 teenage girls has found that vitamin E supplements appear to be a safe and effective way of reducing period pain, reports the June 2005 issue of CHOICE *Health Reader.*



After four months, the duration of cramping associated with each period was down to just two hours for girls taking vitamin E supplements, compared to 17 hours for those not taking the vitamin, and the pain severity was less. Both groups of girls could take ibuprofen if they felt they needed it, yet only 4% of those in the vitamin E group used it compared to 89% in the control group. The study, published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, also found that girls taking the supplements had lighter periods.

While the dose of vitamin E taken in the study was much higher than the recommended dietary intake of around 10 mg per day, it's well below the upper limit of safety of 1000 mg per day, reports *Health Reader*.

For more information about vitamin E and its potential benefits, see the multivitamins article in June CHOICE.

Also in June *Health Reader*:

- A British study comparing antimicrobial treatments for acne — including skin lotions and oral antibiotics — has found that all the treatment combinations were moderately effective and there wasn't much difference between them. However the most cost-effective was benzoyl peroxide. And while the other treatments tested have the problem of causing antibiotic resistance, it doesn't appear to.
- Researchers in Sweden have found that the size of a person's waistline is the best way to predict whether they'll have insulin resistance — a condition that makes blood sugar, insulin and blood fat levels go up, as well as susceptibility to diabetes and heart disease. People with a waistline larger than 100 cm have a greater risk of insulin resistance than those with smaller waistlines.

If you'd like to subscribe to CHOICE *Health Reader*, call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.

WORLD CONSUMER SNAPSHOT

WATERED-DOWN PORK

In the UK, consumers who buy pork in supermarkets were warned last year that they risked being misled because of the food industry's practice of adding water to raw meat. The watered-down pork, which can have a meat content as low as 87%, was being sold alongside genuine raw pork at premium prices, UK consumer magazine *Which?* reports.

At one supermarket, pork with added water (plus glucose syrup and salt) was sold in the premium range for around £2 more per kilogram than unadulterated pork in the standard range. According to the supermarket, the pork was classified as 'premium' because it had had longer maturation and the the pigs had been reared outside — it wasn't the added water at all.

IT'S A WRITE-OFF!

While investigating a newspaper ad for an Australian proofreading and copy editing course that claimed top editors could earn $179 an hour, our New Zealand counterparts found on the school's website a testimonial from a former student. They followed it up and, sure enough, he had written the testimonial, but in 1988, and his version had no spelling errors in it — the website version had two. Not a good sign for a school claiming it trains proofreaders and editors, remarks *Consumer.* The school's last marketing manager couldn't spell, *Consumer* was told, which begs the question why it didn't employ one of its graduates at $179 an hour to fix things up. They would have jumped at the chance, given the going hourly rate is more like $20–50.

GOING SKIING?

If you're planning to take a digital camera on your next skiing trip, make sure you don't leave it where it can get too cold, like in the car or an outside pocket of your jacket. German *Test* magazine advises that digital cameras are particularly sensitive to cold and won't survive frost. Their batteries also tend to lose power in the cold, so you mightn't be able to switch the camera on. To avoid all these problems, keep the camera close to your warm body rather than in a jacket pocket when outside. This way you'll also avoid condensation building up inside the camera when you enter a heated room.

In the US, *Consumer Reports on Health* suggests you wear a helmet when skiing. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, a helmet could have prevented or reduced the severity of an estimated 40% of head injuries among skiers and snowboarders in 2002. So, don't ski or board without one.

The *BMJ* (*British Medical Journal*) reports the findings of a Canadian study that found while helmets protect against head injuries, the estimates for neck injury were more imprecise and might be compatible with an increased risk.

yourletters

Unit pricing revisited

When I worked in the UK, I noticed that a lot of items on supermarket shelves had the actual price listed, and also the unit price. For instance, a packet of 12 toilet rolls had a price of '£x', as well as a price of '£y' per roll listed next to it. In this way, you could compare the price per roll against the prices of packets of five, eight or 10 toilet rolls.

It's so frustrating going grocery shopping and not being able to directly compare a product with a different-sized package or a competing brand.

We can compare the price of petrol per litre from one service station to another, so why not the price of individual grocery items?

James Hamilton
Mortdale, NSW

CHOICE has been advocating unit pricing for years. It's already mandatory that certain products sold in bulk, such as cheese and fresh vegetables, are priced this way, making it easier to compare products and calculate the best price. The only way to make it happen is to continue to ask for it — so contact the head office of your local supermarket and ask them why they haven't provided this service.

Miraculous mouthwash

For many years I was a sufferer of 'gum pockets'. No matter how religiously I brushed and flossed, I still had to book in to see the dentist every three months for a thorough clean and scrape.

Then a few years ago, a friend told me about hydrogen peroxide, saying many dentists had recommended it over the last 100 years or so as an effective mouth rinse. Willing to try anything by then, I started rinsing twice a day, and the results were immediate. My gum disease settled down within two days, and had completely disappeared in two weeks.

Since then, I have found that a 30-second mouth rinse once a day before retiring, with about a small capful of half water, half hydrogen peroxide, keeps my teeth clean, my mouth fresh and gum disease a thing of the past.

It's only about three dollars at the supermarket, and if you ask me, it's a blessing in a bottle.

Graham Warn
Lugarno, NSW

The Australian Dental Association confirmed that low concentrations of hydrogen peroxide have been used for many years as a treatment for minor gum disease by reducing bacteria in the mouth. Diluting commercially available hydrogen peroxide with equal parts of water (to a resulting concentration of 1.5–3%) will give you a mouth wash that won't irritate your gums.

However, the Association did point out that in advanced gum disease the 'gum pockets' are too deep for the hydrogen peroxide to penetrate, so other forms of treatment are necessary. In worst cases untreated gum disease can lead to tooth loss.

Is the lady of the house in?

I receive phone calls from people trying to sell me their goods and services most days of the week. I reached the end of my patience last Wednesday, when I was waiting for an important call concerning the serious illness of a family member. That day I got seven calls from people trying to sell me financial services, home insulation, phone services and various domestic products. When I asked each caller to take me off their list, I was met with the response they were "...only doing their job", and working from a list they'd been given.

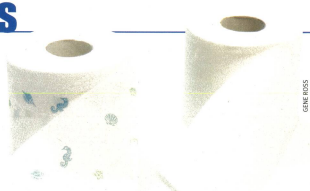
I work from home, so I'm subjected to these unwelcome calls day and evening — even to as late as 9 pm.

I don't need financial or domestic services. I already subscribe to a number of charities. Requests in the mail I can simply throw away, but the phone calls are intrusive and infuriating.

I have requested the Australian Direct Marketing Association (ADMA) to please *stop* them. I would be glad to receive a written acknowledgement of this request from ADMA.

Jean Porter,
Hornsby, NSW

This story has a happy ending. Jean Porter persistently called ADMA and asked to be put through to 'someone in authority', eventually reaching someone in the organisation who said she would take care of it — and did. The pesky calls have since ceased.



GENE ROSS

THUMBS UP!

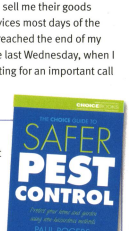
Clare Dowling, via email, awards a thumbs up to **KINGS**, Brisbane, a delivery company **IKEA** uses. They rang on the day of delivery to give an approximate time of arrival and again 30 minutes before arriving to confirm, carried the item carefully and were generally polite and helpful. And they don't only deliver for **IKEA** — anyone can use them.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs. Positive outcomes you've had to a complaint you took to a manufacturer, retailer, importer or tradesperson interest us, too. Address these letters to *Thumbs Up* at the address on page 2.

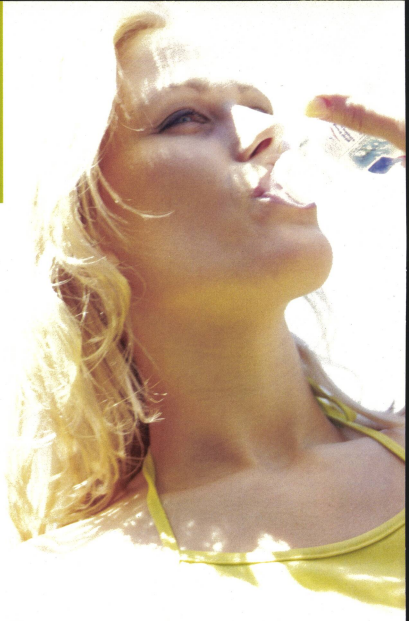
To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, James Hamilton of Mortdale, NSW, receives *The CHOICE Guide to Safer Pest Control*, or any other book of his choice from Consumer Bookshelf, pages 47 to 48.

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 2 for how to reach us.



A triumph

Pay for bottled water if you like the taste, but don't kid yourself it's healthier than tap water.



IN A NUTSHELL

- **For most of us, there's no good reason to believe bottled water's** *any healthier than tap water. Tap water generally has to comply with strict standards, and it's thoroughly tested — with the bonus that it costs virtually nothing.*
- **Bottled water doesn't necessarily taste better.** *Our taste panel couldn't distinguish between either of the two leading brands of bottled water (**MOUNT FRANKLIN** and **FRANTELLE**) and Sydney tap water. It may be different in other places.*
- **Bottled water can be a handy** *alternative to soft drinks or juice when you're out and about, and it has no kilojoules.*

Bottled water's now big business. In Australia we down 150 million litres a year at a cost of $123 million. Which seems odd when most people can turn on a tap and get a drink of water for virtually nothing.

We ran a quick e-poll on CHOICE Online asking the main reason why people bought bottled water. Of 612 responses:

- 24% said they thought it less likely to contain harmful bacteria.
- 16% thought it tasted better than tap water.
- 8% said they thought it was less likely to contain nasty chemicals.

The rest, though, were more down-to-earth — 29% simply thought it a handy drink to have when you're out and 22% said they bought it mainly because it comes in a useful bottle that you can refill from the tap.

What's the real story with bottled vs tap water?

THE QUALITY OF TAP WATER

Tap water is required to comply with the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* and to be tested regularly for bacteria and chemical contaminants. It's treated to remove sediment, then filtered and disinfected to kill harmful micro-organisms and prevent them from regrowing in the water mains and pipes. In most places a small amount of fluoride is also added because it's been proved to be of enormous benefit in preventing tooth decay.

The usual disinfectant is chlorine. It's cheap and effective, and has a long history of safe use around the world. However, there's concern that chlorination can produce very small amounts of chemicals called trihalomethanes (THM) that may cause cancer. THM are produced by the reaction of chlorine with organic matter from the soil and vegetation in the catchment area. Most of the organic matter is removed before the water is treated with chlorine so the risk is

# of marketing

thought to be very small. Even alternative disinfectants, such as ozone (often used for bottled water) produce by-products that could present some health risks.

The benefits of chlorination appear to vastly outweigh the risks. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the risk of cancer from THM is 100 to 1000 times less than the risk of death from harmful bacteria in unchlorinated water.

Other concerns about the quality of our tap water came to the fore with the cryptosporidium and giardia scare in Sydney in 1998. These are protozoa rather than bacteria, and can cause diarrhoea. They're more resistant to chlorine than most other micro-organisms but filtering should remove them from tap water. Water suppliers regularly test for them so the risk of infection from tap water is now very small. (You're much more at risk from protozoa if you swim in a public pool.)

PHOTOLIBRARY

As for the taste, obviously it depends on where you live. But if it's chlorine you don't like, it's easily got rid of by keeping a bottle or jug of water in the fridge — after a few hours the smell and taste disappear. And see *Can you tell it from tap water?*, below right, for the results of a small taste test on bottled vs tap water.

IS BOTTLED WATER ANY SAFER?

The names are evocative. The labels have pictures of cascading mountain streams. The claims imply bottled water is purer and healthier than tap water: *additive free … collected fresh and pure … free from impurities that you find in tap water … helps keep you fit and healthy … supplement your body's natural mineral requirements*.

While in Europe there are strict controls and 'spring water' has to be untreated and bottled at its source, we don't have similar regulations in Australia. 'Spring water' here is quite likely to have been transported in bulk and treated much like tap water. *What's in a name?*, right, has more detail on this.

Bottled water is regulated under the national Food Standards Code, and the purity standards imposed aren't as strict as those for tap water. However, just like any food that's sold in Australia, bottled water must be free of harmful bacteria, and there are specified limits to the amounts of substances like arsenic and heavy metals (such as copper, lead and mercury) it can contain.

The industry's Australian Bottled Water Institute (ABWI) has a 'Model Code' that specifies a self-regulation scheme for members which includes a testing program, but any independent checking is left to the states. However, state health authorities almost never do any testing because bottled water is considered to be low-risk.

Tests carried out for the *Weekend Australian* in March this year showed that tap water from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide contained no harmful bacteria — and the same applied to the two leading brands of bottled water (**MOUNT FRANKLIN** and **FRANTELLE**).

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Most brands of bottled water call themselves 'spring water', but there are also other types.

Spring water, according to the ABWI 'Model Code', must come from underground. It contains 'soluble matter' (which is mostly dissolved minerals), and no extra minerals should be added. But it's not necessarily untreated and it doesn't

Can you tell it from tap water?

We chose the two leading brands of bottled water, **MOUNT FRANKLIN** and **FRANTELLE** (together they supply nearly a third of the bottled water sold in Australia) and compared them with Sydney tap water. The water was tasted at room temperature and we stored the tap water overnight in empty **MOUNT FRANKLIN** or **FRANTELLE** bottles.

We asked our 21 tasters to pick the odd one out of three samples — they didn't know if two were the bottled water and one tap water, or vice versa. They then had to say which they preferred, the odd one out or the others.

It's only a small test but its results backed up other research findings: our testers couldn't distinguish between either of the two big brands of bottled water and Sydney tap water.

necessarily come from the picturesque location implied by the graphics on the label. Unless the label specifies that the water has been 'bottled at source', it's probably been transported to a bottling plant in a bulk tanker (the two biggest brands, **MOUNT FRANKLIN** and **FRANTELLE**, both fall into this category). Many spring waters are filtered and some may be chemically disinfected (usually with ozone).

- **Artesian water** is similar, except that the water probably comes from deeper underground. (Artesian water is confined underground between layers of impervious rock and is under pressure, so it comes to the surface without pumping.) One of the brands (**MOREE Artesian Mineral Water**) has a high mineral content, but the others have much the same as spring water.
- **Purified water** could be tap water that's been distilled (a process that removes almost everything that's not H_2O) or otherwise treated to remove bacteria, dissolved organic material and minerals. Some brands, though, are purified spring water.

USEFUL MINERALS?

Most (but not all) bottled water is labelled with a 'typical analysis' of its mineral content. It's a guide to the water's mineral content but actual levels may vary over time.

In general, the levels of minerals in bottled water are quite low compared with the daily amount you need from your diet. Calcium is the one that's declared on bottled water labels that would most likely be of benefit, as, according to the Australian Nutrition Survey, about 90% of women and 70% of children don't get enough. According to the labels of the brands we found, **VITTEL** has the most (91 mg/L), but you'd need to drink about 10 L of it to get near the daily recommended intake of calcium.

If you're concerned about too much sodium, the only bottled water we found with a significant level according to its label was **MOREE Artesian Mineral Water**. One litre would give you more than 10% of your maximum recommended intake.

AN EXPENSIVE ALTERNATIVE

We found bottled water for just 46 or 47 cents per litre (see the table, far right) — but tap water's even cheaper. Unless you really hate the taste of your local water or you're after out-and-about convenience, there's no other good reason to pay for something that's not guaranteed to be safer and is no better for you. Hence the title of this article: *A triumph of marketing*.

You can get 'bottled' water in bigger containers (we found sizes of up to 10 litres in some supermarkets) but the price doesn't get significantly less — and you run the risk of the water becoming contaminated with bacteria from the air before you've finished it (see *Bottled risks*, right).

But bottled water's a handy alternative to soft drinks and juices when you're out. It has no sugar and no kilojoules — with the added bonus that it's usually the cheapest drink in the chiller cabinet.

WATER ON THE BRAIN?

We found three brands of bottled water with names suggesting they're 'organic' (**ORGANIC SPRINGS, OZ ORGANICS** and **SNOWY MOUNTAIN ORGANIC**). If you've studied chemistry you'll know that 'organic' refers to compounds of carbon (other than carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide). Water, H_2O, doesn't qualify.

And according to the *National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products*, natural products such as water can't be labelled as 'organic' or 'bio-dynamic'. Nevertheless, **ORGANIC SPRINGS** and **OZ ORGANICS** have the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) logo on their labels. BFA told us that water shouldn't be labelled as 'organic' because it's not of agricultural origin. But it can be registered with them as an 'approved product', meaning that it's free from additives or pollutants.

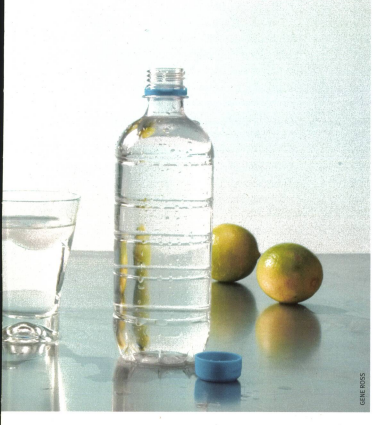
Bottled risks

You have to take some care with bottled water. Tests carried out by *Health Which?* in the UK found that once it's opened, bacteria levels can increase if it's kept at room temperature. Air can carry bacteria and the spores of moulds, so once you've opened a bottle of water it's safest to keep it in the fridge.

This can be a problem if you buy the larger containers or have home delivery. And it means you also shouldn't leave bottles of water lying around in the car if they've been opened (or refilled from the tap at home). Drinking from the bottle can spread bacteria from your mouth into the water too, so for both reasons it's safer to throw out any you haven't finished. You may have got away with it so far, but it's safer to take an unopened (or freshly refilled) bottle each day.

Bottled water definitely shouldn't be used for babies unless you boil it first (just as you would tap water). And giving children exclusively bottled water deprives them of the fluoride that's added to tap water in most places to increase the resistance of their teeth to decay.

On the positive side, there's no substance to fears that bottled water is contaminated with toxic chemicals from the plastic bottle. Nearly all the brands of bottled water in our test came in PET bottles (and the few that weren't PET were glass). PET (short for polyethylene terephthalate) has no plasticisers — nothing to leach out into the water.



GENE ROSS

1 Brand (in order of price per litre)	2 Price / L ($)	Size priced (mL)	Origin
SPRING WATER			
NORTHBROOK Natural Australian Spring Water	0.46	1500	Australia
HOME BRAND Natural Spring Water	0.47	1500	Australia
BLACK & GOLD Natural Spring Water	0.58	1500	Australia
TORQUAY Natural Spring Water	0.73	1500	Australia
BKK Aqua Still Spring Water	0.74	1500	Australia
IGA Evita Natural Spring Water	0.75	1500	Australia
ARTIC ICE Natural Spring Water	0.79	1500	Australia
COLES Natural Spring Water	0.83	600	Australia
PEATS RIDGE SPRINGS Natural Still Spring Water	0.92	600	Not stated
SNOWY MOUNTAIN Organic Natural Spring Water	0.93	1500	Australia
AROONA Sports Body Quencher	0.98	1000	Australia
BI-LO Natural Spring Water	1.08	600	Australia
OZ2O	1.08	600	Australia
ORGANIC SPRINGS Pure Still Spring Water	1.13	1500	Australia
DANCING Natural Spring Water	1.15	600	Australia
H2GO Pure Spring Water	1.32	750	Australia
MOUNT FRANKLIN	1.57	1000	Australia
FRANTELLE All Natural Spring Water	1.62	600	Australia
OZ ORGANICS Spring Water	1.65	600	Australia
COLES FARMLAND Natural Spring Water	1.73	600	Australia
COOL RIDGE Still Spring Water	1.85	600	Australia
AQUAQUEEN Australian Spring Water	1.90	500	Australia
SUMMIT Natural Spring Water	1.98	600	Australia
SANTA CROCE Natural Mineral Water	2.47	750	Italy
VITTEL Natural Mineral Water	2.80	500	France
EVIAN Natural Spring Water	3.02	500	France
ACQUA PANNA Natural Mineral Water	5.00	750	Italy
PURIFIED WATER			
BICKFORD'S Aqua Pura	0.74	1500	Australia
WATERFORDS Pure Water	0.99	2000	Australia
PUMP Pure Water	1.08	750	Australia
NOBLES Pureau	1.23	2000	Australia
ORIGINAL JUICE CO Purified Water	1.32	600	Australia
GRANDER	1.63	600	Australia
ADAMS ALE	1.92	600	Australia
ARTESIAN BORE WATER			
IOLI Natural Spring Water	0.66	1500	Greece
ETERNAL New Zealand Artesian Water	1.65	600	NZ
MOREE Artesian Mineral Water	1.99	1500	Australia

1 Brand
These are the brands we found distributed across several states. Many others have a more local distribution. We've ranked them by price and grouped them by type.

2 Price per litre
Bottle sizes vary, so for comparison we calculated the price per litre based on what we paid in Sydney or Adelaide in March 2005 for the size closest to one litre.

CAN I EAT IT?

When do old leftovers or mouldy tomato paste go from should-be-OK to downright risky?

IN A NUTSHELL

We answer your queries *about the dodgy items lurking in your fridge and cupboard.*

Q&A ***Is it OK to cut the mould off my cheese?***

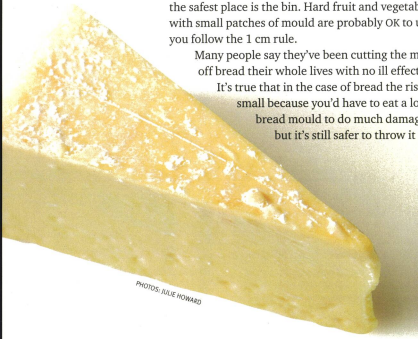
Moulds can produce toxins that can damage your liver, kidneys and immune system. Some cheeses, like blue cheeses and the rind on camembert, are obviously meant to be mouldy. But when it comes to small mould patches on normally-not-mouldy hard varieties, you need to cut away *at least* a 1 cm chunk under and around the mould because it may have penetrated farther in than you can see — don't just slice it off the edge. Always throw any food away that's very mouldy.

Cutting or scooping the mould off soft cheeses is very risky — its invisible threads can go well below the surface. It's safest to chuck them.

Q&A ***And while we're at it, what about scraping the mould off jam, tomato paste, sour cream, cottage cheese, cream cheese, yoghurt, fruit, vegies and bread?***

The same goes for all soft foods including processed foods and soft fruit and vegies — invisible mould can go deep and any toxins produced can be dangerous: the safest place is the bin. Hard fruit and vegetables with small patches of mould are probably OK to use if you follow the 1 cm rule.

Many people say they've been cutting the mould off bread their whole lives with no ill effects. It's true that in the case of bread the risk is small because you'd have to eat a lot of bread mould to do much damage, but it's still safer to throw it out. Toasting the bread may kill the mould, but won't do anything to toxins that have already been made.



PHOTOS: JULIE HOWARD

Q&A ***I found a tin of peaches at the back of the cupboard that appears to predate civilisation as we know it. Is it OK?***

If the tin is still in good condition — no rust, corrosion, dents, holes or swelling — it's probably fine. Some canned foods can last for years, though planning to use them within 12 months will mean you'll eat them at their best (and baby foods should be used within six months). The older a tin gets the more likely the contents will start to lose quality — flavour, texture, colour, aroma or nutritional value.

Q&A ***What about those dented or rusty tins — are they OK?***

You have to use a bit of common sense with dents — small dents in otherwise new and undamaged cans may be fine. However, cans that are damaged enough to let air in are extremely dangerous, and even a small dent could be enough to damage the seams where the can is sealed. Since you can't tell for sure, it's safer not to eat from a dented can.

Rusting can happen when cans aren't stored in dry enough conditions, but a small amount probably won't damage the can enough to affect the contents. If there's a lot of rust it's safest not to use it.

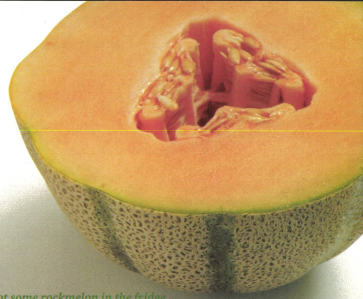
If a can's bulging it means bacteria are breeding inside — food from a bulging can should definitely not be eaten.

Q&A ***There are some chops in the freezer which could be the same vintage as those prehistoric peaches — they've got some whitish spots, but they won't kill me, will they?***

The whitish spots are freezer burn — dry patches caused by air getting inside the wrapping. It won't kill you — you can just cut the spots off.

But as for the prehistoric nature of the chops, as a general rule only keep lamb chops for about six to

nine months in the freezer (beef steak about six to 12 months, an on-the-bone roast six, pork chops four to six, chicken six, mince or diced meat two, sausages only one to two months and bacon one month). Always date-mark things as they go into the freezer and try to check the dates regularly.



Q&A *My home economics teacher used to joke that weevils and moths in flour and other dry goods were just added protein — is it OK just to sift them out?*

Apart from the yuk factor (which rules this out for most people, but clearly not for those who asked us this question), there are good reasons not to use flour or other dry goods that have been infested with weevils, moths and the like. Some insects can produce harmful chemicals, and a heavy infestation can also encourage mould growth, which in turn can produce dangerous toxins. So the bottom line is: if it moves, chuck it out.

Q&A *I've heard cooked rice is a risky food, but it just seems indestructible — how long is it safe to leave it hanging around in the fridge?*

It's not so much a question of how long you can leave it in the fridge (a couple of days is probably OK), but more about what happened to it before you put it there.

Raw rice can contain bacteria called *Bacillus cereus*, which can survive cooking and can cause serious food poisoning. If cooked rice is left too long at room temperature or in a too warm fridge, the bacteria can multiply. *B cereus* produces toxins that aren't killed by reheating, so reheating dodgy rice won't help. So, if you're storing cooked rice, cool it quickly (don't leave it in the pot or on the bench), keep it in the fridge — and make sure your fridge is cold enough (around 4°C or a bit less). Also see **leftovers**, page 14.

Q&A *Is there anything wrong with wilted carrots and celery — they've been in the crisper, well, quite some time?*

They're just suffering from dehydration — water loss — so they're safe to use. Use them as is or revive them in cold water for an hour or so — just watch out for any mouldy bits that may be a problem (see **mould**, above left). Old vegies will have lost some of their nutritional value, though.

Q&A *I've got some rockmelon in the fridge — it was delicious, a few days ago, anyway. Can I cut the slimy outside off and eat the middle?*

As long as it's a large, unpeeled piece, and the slimy bit was only a minor part of the whole, you should be able to safely cut it off. Be generous when cutting away, as the rotting part could leave unpleasant flavours behind in parts that still look OK. And eat it promptly, then and there — don't turn it into fruit salad for later or take it for lunch, for example.

However, there are exceptions to the cut-the-slime-off rule: pre-cut, pre-prepared foods, like fruit salad or bagged lettuce, and, in particular, slimy bean sprouts. The slime on these foods may contain dangerous bacteria — don't eat them.

Q&A *Is it OK to rinse off slippery ham and use it?*

The ham is slippery because there are bacteria multiplying on its surface. You've no idea what they are, so treat slime as a warning and bin it.

Is it safe to eat chocolate when it gets those white patches on it?

This is just from temperature changes — the cocoa butter and sometimes the sugar start to separate from the chocolate. It won't hurt you and you may not even notice it when you eat it, but once it's gone too far (you'll know when you try some) the chocolate will have a very strange and not-very-pleasant grainy texture.

My favourite restaurant is always happy to send the leftovers home in a doggy bag — is it only fit for the dog, or can I eat it?

Food in a doggy bag has likely had a tough time. It's been sitting around on your plate cooling down, it's been contaminated by you while you were eating it, and then it's been carried home before finally being put in the fridge, so it is a risk. Experts advise that if you *are* going to risk it, make sure it spends no more than four hours between the time it first landed on your plate and when you get it home into the fridge, which could be tricky — and it should always be reheated really well.

The leftovers from my famous bolognese sauce have been lurking at the back of my fridge for the best part of a week — can I reheat it tonight?

Leftovers should be eaten or frozen within two to three days of cooking, so it would be safest to throw it out. After about four days, potentially harmful micro-organisms may have reached risky levels.

The two to three-day rule assumes your sauce was cooled quickly after cooking and then kept in a clean, covered container in the fridge (which was 4°C or less). If you haven't eaten it within two or three days you can still freeze it and reheat it — thoroughly — later. But once it's been reheated, any leftovers should be binned.

I met a friend just outside the checkout and then got stuck in traffic on the way home from the supermarket. My frozen food has started to defrost — can I just put it back into the freezer?

It depends. Small pieces of meat, fish or poultry may have completely thawed, and shouldn't be frozen again without cooking them first. If they still feel chilled to touch, you could refrigerate them and use them quickly — that day or the next. If they don't feel chilled, it would be safest to throw them away.

Dented cans can be dangerous, see page 12.

Larger items of these foods can be refrozen, provided they still are mainly frozen and the defrosted bits still feel chilled. Some items may not be as nice on second chilling — ice cream or frozen vegies, for example.

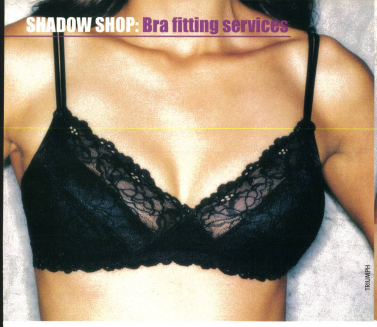
If in doubt, throw away the food, especially if it's a hot day. A coolbag kept in the boot of your car for frozen foods is a good idea — and the super-organised might like to use frozen ice bricks, too. ■

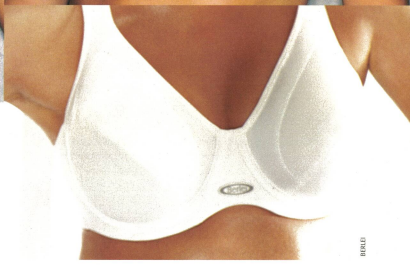
All about dates

Most prepacked foods are labelled with a date of some kind.

- Foods that have a **use-by date** should be eaten or frozen before the end of the date shown, for safety reasons. You shouldn't eat them after this date and it's illegal for shops to sell foods once a use-by date has passed.
- Foods that have a **best-before date** are less perishable, and this date gives a guide to how long you can expect the food to keep its quality (not safety). It's OK to eat (and legal to sell) these foods after the date has passed. Use your common sense — while they'll often be perfectly acceptable, they may sometimes not be as good-quality as they once were.
- Bread can have a **'baked on'** date or even a **'baked for'** date, instead of a best-before date.

All dates only apply if the food has been properly stored and transported, so if the packaging looks damaged or otherwise suspect, give it a miss.





Fit for what?

Can you rely on professional fitters to find you a bra that fits?

It's estimated that over 70% of women are wearing the wrong-size bra. Poorly fitting bras — especially for larger women — can cause all sorts of problems, such as shoulder, neck and back pain; poor posture; grooves in the shoulder; upper limb pain; nerve symptoms (pins and needles and numbness); and skin irritation and chafing.

Manufacturers and retailers recommend that women get professionally fitted for a bra every time they buy a new one. Department stores and lingerie specialist stores offer the service free, yet many women have never been fitted for a bra, and those who have might do so only irregularly.

While it would be nice to think using a fitting service would guarantee a good bra, is it really the case? We put professional fitters to the test.

HOW DO FITTERS MEASURE UP?

Our 12 undercover underwear shoppers ranged in age from 25 to 67, with bra sizes ranging from 12B to 20F. They went to various Myer, David Jones, Bras'N'Things (a national lingerie chain) and some independent lingerie stores and asked to be fitted for an 'everyday' bra they could wear to work, shopping or just out and about.

They emphasised that a good fit was the most important thing, with looks and colour less important. From each shop they bought a bra recommended as a good fit, bringing a total of 49 bras into CHOICE to be assessed by a panel of experts in bra fitting (see *Who are our experts?*, page 18).

We were surprised and dismayed to find that most of the bras — 68% — were a poor fit. Having the wrong cup size was the biggest problem, with 43% too small (only one of the 49 bras had a cup size that was too large). The effect is that breast tissue is forced out of the top, sides and/or bottom of the bra. Related to this, 42% of fitters recommended bras with the wrong underwire shape, with wires cutting across breast tissue and putting pressure on it, instead of encircling the breast.

Another major problem area was the underband, with 22% being too loose and 20% too tight. The underband plays an important role in supporting the weight of the breasts, helping reduce strain on the shoulders — much like the hip belt on a backpack.

Our experts also found that the side wings and/or back of the underband weren't wide enough to provide proper support in 35% of cases, at least for an everyday bra (less support may be acceptable for a 'fashion' bra — see *Sharing the blame*, page 16, for more about fashion versus everyday bras). The side wings also help enclose the breast tissue and hold the wire in the correct position.

A bra was considered an 'acceptable' fit if it was simply a matter of adjusting the shoulder straps to make it a good fit: even though the bra itself was fine, the fitter hadn't done as good as possible a job of fitting it. 16% of the bras were an acceptable fit, and 16% a good fit.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Many women** *are wearing poorly fitting bras, which can cause health problems, especially for larger-breasted women.*
- **Our shadow shop found** *that using a professional in-store fitter isn't any guarantee of getting a well-fitting bra.*

ARE THEY REALLY SO BAD?

The poor results were also something of a surprise to our guinea pig shoppers: we'd asked them to rate how well they thought each bra fitted when they bought it (before they were assessed by the experts) and 96% of the bras were considered a good or acceptable fit by the wearers.

It can be difficult to tell how comfortable a bra will be when trying it on — walking, twisting and other movement will affect its position, and what seems fine after a few minutes standing in the change room might feel very different after 10 hours on the go.

To see if our experts were perhaps a little harsh in their ratings, we asked each of our guinea pigs to wear a bra that they'd considered a good fit, yet the experts said was a poor fit, for a whole day. While a larger trial would be needed for a definitive conclusion, the overall rating was that the bras caused only 'mild discomfort'.

Our experts think the reason for this discrepancy is that women have a low expectation of comfort from bras. We don't expect a bra to be comfortable, and we just put up with it. (A brief straw poll in the office backed up this analysis — no-one said they expected a bra to be comfortable.) However, the experts argue, if it *is* possible to get a comfortable bra, why put up with anything less?

SHARING THE BLAME

Choosing a well-fitting bra is partly limited by the choice available. There's a certain willingness to sacrifice comfort for looks — women tend to want something that looks good. Manufacturers cater to this, with a large proportion of models designed for their appearance — a 'fashion' bra — rather than comfort and support.

A fashion bra is less supportive mainly because it uses less material: finer straps and a narrower back, with some support under breast tissue but not on top of it. It's designed to be worn for a short period of time — like out to dinner, or for special occasions.

A good everyday bra will make you feel more comfortable, and it's not impossible to get a pretty one. But if vanity still rules, consider this: it will also make your clothes look better — and that's generally what most people are going to see!

Bear in mind also that manufacturers are faced with the daunting task of designing for an apparently infinite variation in breast sizes and shape — and how do you engineer a perfect fit for the many women whose breasts are uneven or different sizes?

If you want to get a bra that fits well, you could get lucky and happen upon a good fitter. Otherwise, use our *Does the bra fit?* checklist on page 19 to check the fit yourself — copy it and take it with you.

FIT BY STORE

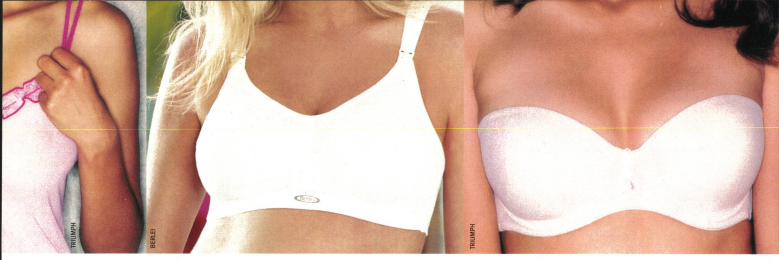
	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Total
Bras'N'Things	2	3	10	15
David Jones	2	4	7	13
Myer	2	0	11	13
Independents	2	1	5	8

The number of bras bought from each type of store was too small for meaningful comparison between stores, but there appears to be no major differences — that is, none stood out as being a lot better or a lot worse than others.

THE FINAL VERDICT

PROBLEM AREAS

Cups wrong size	45%
Underband wrong size	44%
Underwire wrong shape	42%
Back underband too narrow	29%
Side wings not high enough	25%



FAQs

Do I need to wear a bra at all?

There's no scientific evidence that going braless will cause breasts to sag — not necessarily because it doesn't happen, but because no one's studied it. The main support for breasts is the skin tissue, which changes as you age, getting thinner and losing elasticity. Stretching also comes about through pregnancy and breastfeeding, and the older you are the less your skin will recover. This happens whether or not you wear a bra.

Larger-breasted women (D cup plus) benefit from wearing a *well-fitting* bra, because having a heavy weight pulling down in front of you affects posture, causing stooping. However, poorly fitting bras that place too much weight on the shoulder straps can cause their own problems.

A and B-cup women may not need the support of a bra, and indeed may prefer a crop-top-style garment.

But despite all the scaremongering you might come across on the internet, wearing a bra doesn't cause cancer!

How do I know what size I am?

If you look at a sizing chart, or even if you're measured by a sales assistant, the final number (12B, 14D, etc) is at best a guide — a starting point. There's little consistency in bra sizing between manufacturers, and even within manufacturers you may find sizing varies from model to model. That means the most accurate measuring in the world to tell you your exact size won't be enough when it comes to fitting a bra — which is why it's so important to try on any bra before you buy it.

- If the cup is too big or too small, try a different cup size (A, B, C, etc) but in the same underband size (10, 12, 14, etc).
- If the underband is too big or too small, go up or down a size, but also note that the cup size might no longer fit. Generally speaking, if you go up an underband size, you'll need to go down a cup size; if you go down an underband size, go up a cup size. So a C cup in a size 12 is roughly equivalent to a B cup in a 14. However, this may only hold for smaller cups (up to and including a C cup).

Always buy a bra that fits on the loosest clip setting. As it stretches with wear, you can then make it tighter.

What does a fitter do?

A good fitter doesn't just measure you and tell you what size to buy. In fact some fitters may not need to measure you at all. Depending on the store's policy (or even whether it's particularly busy or not) they may help you select a bra or bras, explain how to put it on correctly, make adjustments to the straps, find more bras for you to try if the initial selection isn't right, explain what they're doing and looking for at each stage of the fitting process and recommend another shop to try if they're not able to help you.

What does it take to become a qualified fitter?

Fitters in department stores are usually trained by bra manufacturers (Berlei and Triumph in the main), with further assistance and supervision from experienced fitters in the stores. When fitters make the grade, they're given a badge or certificate. It takes a couple of years of hands-on experience to become a specialised fitter.

It's worrying that for all the apparent effort that goes into training fitters, the end result isn't very convincing.

Some manufacturers offer in-store fitting services for customers in larger department stores. Their consultants or stylists are paid by the company, not the store. They may publicise when they're in certain stores, but most likely you'll need to contact a manufacturer's customer service line to make an appointment for a time and store that suit you. Some stores have consultants working there full-time, though they're still paid by the company, not the store.

We didn't test these consultant fitting services so we can't compare them with in-store fitters.

Are underwires necessary for good support?

In short, no. However, the design of the bra has to be appropriate — you can't just take the underwires out of

SHARON CAHILL

WHO ARE OUR EXPERTS?

Katherine Drago (left, of Intimate Apparel) and Caterina Giuliano (centre, of Leila O'Toole) are corsetieres who've worked as fitters and stockists in the lingerie retail industry, including in the area of specialist fittings (such as for women who've had breast surgery). They have over 20 years of fitting experience between them.

Deirdre McGhee (right) is an APA sports physiotherapist who has worked extensively with female athletes and women suffering from musculoskeletal problems caused by poorly fitting bras. She is currently an academic and masters student at the University of Wollongong researching breast biomechanics and exercise-induced breast discomfort, with the view to helping manufacturers design better bras.

an underwire bra and expect it to work the same way. Essentially, underwires allow designers to use less material in the bra, especially in the top of the cup, the side wings and front underband. This is why so many fashion bras have underwires.

Berlei says it has tested underwire and softcup versions of its New Legend sports bras, and found little difference in 'breast bounce reduction' between them. And that's when jogging and running — a harsh test.

How do I care for it?

Our experts recommend bras be handwashed, not machine-washed. The washing machine cycle is too long, tosses the bra around and wears out the fabric. It can also mangle or dislodge the wires. A washing bag (solid, not mesh) and a gentle cycle will help, though. Do the hooks up before you wash it.

After being worn, bras will stretch, but washing them (properly) will help them regain their original shape. However, if you wear them too often between washings, they can stretch beyond recovery. Ideally our experts recommend having three or four bras for a week's wear.

Another no-no is putting a bra on backwards to do the clips up, then twisting it around the right way: this puts a lot of stress and stretch on the band.

How's a sports bra different from a regular bra?

Sports bras are less stretchy than other bras (the material and straps have less give) and have more support over the top of the breast tissue to prevent tissue from bouncing up.

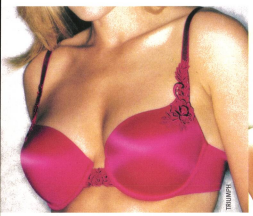
The position of seams and the type of material are chosen to prevent chafing. Some also offer ventilation panels and absorbent or 'wicking' materials, although their benefits may be more psychological than physical.

The level of support provided varies among sports bras, and they're often tailored to different types of sport. A bra designed for running will provide more support than one for cycling, which will in turn provide more support than one for yoga.

Does colour affect the bra?

This might seem like a strange question, but anecdotally at least it seems that a black and a white bra, say, of the same brand and model fit differently. In our trial we had someone with two of the same size and model of bra, but different colours: one in brown, which fitted, and one in black, which didn't.

One of the manufacturers we spoke to confirmed our suspicions, explaining that the dyeing process for black bras affects the material, making it stiffer. So if you like the fit of a bra in white, and decide you also want a black one — or vice versa — don't just buy the other without trying it on.



TRIUMPH

BERLEI

TRIUMPH

GOOD FIT

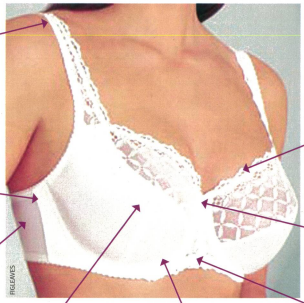
Shoulder straps are snug, without falling down or cutting into your skin.

There are no unsightly bulges when you put your top on — check above and below the underband at the back, and above the cups at the front (it's often more obvious with a close-fitting top than when bare).

The side wing encloses the breast with no bulging bits near your armpits.

The back of the underband lies level with the front.

The underband is snug enough not to shift around, but still allows you to fit two fingers under the hooks.



The bra stays in place when you lift your arms.

The material of the cup lies smoothly and encloses breast tissue at the top.

Ideally, the wire at the centre-front sits flat on the chest. However, this might not be possible in larger (E or F) cup sizes.

The front underband pulls the wire in snugly, but allows you to fit a finger under it.

The mid-point of the breasts should sit on your chest wall approximately halfway down your upper arm. They shouldn't be squashed towards each other, nor so far apart that they're heading sideways.

The wire closely encases the breast at the sides, in the middle and at the bottom.

DOES THE BRA FIT?

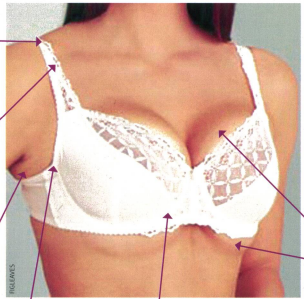
BAD FIT

Shoulder straps dig into your shoulders — most likely the straps are bearing too much weight. The underband size (12, 14, etc) may be too big, or the shoulder straps too short to adjust properly. They could also be too thin.

Shoulder straps slide off. Try tightening them; if that's not the problem, try a style with shoulder straps aligned in the middle of the cup, rather than to the side.

Flesh bulges over the back underband — the underband is too small.

Flesh bulges over the bra at the armpits — the side wings are too narrow. You may need a fuller-figure-style bra.



The underband is too big if:

- The cup puckers at the nipple.
- The back of the underband rises in the middle.
- The bra moves up when you raise your arms.

The cup is too big or the wrong style for you if:

- It's baggy or wrinkly.

The cup size is too small if:

- Breast tissue spills out at the sides.
- Breast tissue bulges out the top of the cup.
- Breast tissue pokes out the bottom (this could also happen if the underband is too big).

Wire digs into your arm — the wire may be too long for you, or the cup is too big, so the wire doesn't sit against the root of the breast.

Wire cuts across the breast tissue, or doesn't sit snugly up against the sides/bottom of breast tissue — the wire is the wrong shape. Try a different size, or a different brand/model.

7 DEADLY* SINS OF FOOD LABELLING

Don't be taken in by everything you see on the label ...

** May not result in actual loss of life!*

IN A NUTSHELL

When you're buying *food, don't assume that what you see at first glance is what you get — a more detailed look at the label can reveal surprises.*

When you're hurrying to do your weekly grocery shop, chances are the decision to buy a food product will be based on a quick glance at the label. Few people have the time (or the inclination) to examine every label in detail to make sure you know exactly what you're getting. But sometimes if you look closely enough, there's more to the product than meets the eye.

We've looked at the common techniques manufacturers use to persuade us that their products are what we want.

New Formula
Fruit Pulp
10 LOLLIPOPS
Freshness & FRUIT
Chupa Chups
10 UNITS NET WEIGHT 130g e
•ENG/ FRUIT FLAVOUR LOLLIPOPS. Ingredients: Sugar, glucose syrup, food acid (citric), concentrated fruit puree (equivalent to fresh fruits 3%: apple, cherry, raspberry, pineapple, lime, lemon, strawberry, peach), flavourings, colours (E-162, E-160c, E-100).
•D/ HARTKARAMELLEN MIT FRUCHTGESCHMACK. Zutaten: Zucker,

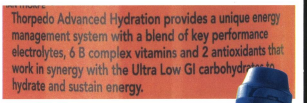
PHOTOS: GENE ROOS

SIN 1: ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Promote the (sometimes arguable) benefits, while ignoring the negatives.

It's common now to see packets of lollies extolling their '99% fat-free' status, as if this will improve their practically-all-sugar reality. **CHUPA CHUPS** lollipops take it a step further with their 'New formula with fruit pulp'. If you take in the 'Freshness and fruit' tag and the luscious fruit pics on the packet, it's possible to infer that they contain fruit so they must be healthy — but the fruit content is a mere 3%.

And after reading through the list of virtues on the **KELLOGG'S Coco Pops** packet ('no artificial colours', 'no preservatives', source of calcium, B vitamins and iron, to name just a few), you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a health food — you have to look closer to see that it's also 37% sugar.

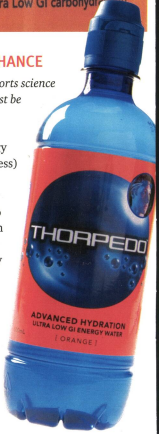

Thorpedo Advanced Hydration provides a unique energy management system with a blend of key performance electrolytes, 6 B complex vitamins and 2 antioxidants that work in synergy with the Ultra Low GI carbohydr
hydrate and sustain energy.

SIN 2: A SPORTING CHANCE

Utilise the belief that if the sports science sounds good, the product must be good.

KELLOGG'S Nutri-Grain promotes itself as 'the energy cereal' ('iron man food' no less) but it actually provides less energy per serve than many other cereals, and with 32% of its kilojoules coming from sugars, there are certainly better choices — particularly if you're not a sportsperson.

If you're after a drink complete with a 'unique energy management system', look no further than Torpey's **THORPEDO Water**. We're not sure what it means, but it sure sounds impressive.



SIN 3: BE VAGUE

Use positive, but meaningless, descriptions.

Terms and claims like 'good', 'healthy' and 'nutritious' sound positive, but aren't defined by law so can legally be applied to pretty much anything, with consumers left to draw their own conclusions about what they mean.

For example, 'Nutritious & delicious health food' is what's emblazoned across the **SANITARIUM Apricot Coconut Delight** pack — an arguable description for a product that's 65% sugar and has almost as much saturated fat as a SNICKERS bar.

'Light' or 'lite' is an equally vague description, and while labels must state somewhere what the product is 'light' in, it's not always immediately obvious. The label of **CRISCO Canola Oil** declares that 'it's light*' — light in kilojoules or fat you could presume. But the obscurely located (very) small print denoted by the asterisk reveals that it's referring to colour and taste.

*Light in colour and taste

Live & Learn

- **LOW GI FOR LONG LASTING**
- **PACKED** WITH HAZELNUTS
- **CONTAINS SKIM MILK**
- **NO ARTIFICIAL** COLOURS AN
- **ONLY** 7.6% COCOA

SIN 4: TICK TICK TICK

Boost the product's appeal by giving it as many ticks as possible.

It's easy to assume that — much like the National Heart Foundation Approved tick — any tick on a food label means that the product meets certain nutrition criteria which could benefit your health. And the more ticks the better. But it's worth taking the time to read what they represent, as often it's little more than a trivial feature of the product.

Breakfast cereal boxes are regularly adorned with ticks alluding to any number of benefits — some more significant than others. But they're not the only products to go tick crazy.

Among the string of ticks on a jar of **FERRERO Nutella** are features as inconsequential as 'contains skim milk', 'packed with hazelnuts' (just as well, seeing it's a hazelnut spread) and 'only 7.6% cocoa' (why 'only'?). And **BETTA Natural Cup Cones** get ticks simply for being 'ideal for parties' and 'sealed in stay-fresh packs'. Not what you'd call crucial nutrition criteria — perhaps some kind of bullet point, rather than a tick, would be more appropriate.

Other tricks of the trade

It's not just through labels that you can persuade people that a product is good for them.

PLAYING THE PART

You can describe a fatty or sugary product as being "an important part of a healthy, balanced diet", or as being "OK to eat occasionally, as long as you're eating plenty of healthy food too". You can also play on the notion that kilojoules are bad but energy is good to change a sugary, high-kilojoule food into one that's "packed with energy".

An argument often used by the food industry is that "there's no such thing as a bad food, just a bad diet". If you subscribe to this you can produce and promote the least nutritious food, and simply put the onus onto the individual to get good nutrition elsewhere.

Here's how some organisations defend the products they promote:

- *"Confectionery tastes great, but it is reassuring to know that Mars snackfoods have real food value that adds interest and variety to a normal balanced diet."*

  MARS Incorporated, maker of confectionery including **M&M's, MARS, MILKY WAY, SNICKERS** and **TWIX.**

- *"Can soft drinks be part of a healthy lifestyle? Yes, people have trusted and enjoyed soft drinks for more than 115 years, and all of our products can be part of a balanced diet."*

  COCA COLA

- *"Not only is chocolate a great source of energy, but it gives us a fantastic boost when we need an emotional massage."*

  CADBURY AUSTRALIA

- *"Confectionery is a source of carbohydrate, protein and fat — all essential macronutrients."*

  Confectionery Manufacturers of Australasia

- *"Sugar and food containing sugar are a vital part of a balanced and varied diet. Sugar is part of the food group known as carbohydrates, one of the best sources of energy around."*

  Australian Food and Grocery Council Sugar Forum

- *"People tend to classify foods as either 'good' or 'bad'. There is no such thing as a 'bad food', only 'bad diets'."*

  Australian Beverages Council

SIN 5: IMAGE MAGIC

Lure you in with a picture that's not necessarily representative of the product.

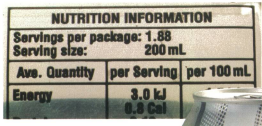
Despite the pictures on the label, neither of the following products met our expectations on closer inspection. Images of chunks of beef adorn the top of the **CONTINENTAL Hearty Beef** soup packet. It's described as 'a robust full flavoured beef soup', but it only contains 2% beef. And **MASTERFOODS Creamy Guacamole Style Dip** is only 1% avocado, yet it shows a large picture of an avocado on the label and describes itself as 'a smooth and creamy blend of tasty avocados, fresh capsicums, garlic and fragrant spices'. Those avocados must be particularly tasty if you only need such a small amount.

INGREDIENTS: WATER, ONIONS 16%, VEGETABLE OIL, GARLIC 6.8%, CAPSICUMS 5%, SUGAR, THICKENERS (MODIFIED CORNSTARCHES), SALT, AVOCADO 1%, YEAST EXTRACT (CONTAINS LACTOSE, FROM WHEAT), SPICES 1%, FOOD ACIDS (CITRIC, LACTIC), VEGETABLE GUM (XANTHAN), FLAVOURS, CHILLI
Manufactured a
CREAMY
CREAMY
MasterFoods
THE TASTEMASTERS
CREAMY
Guacamole
Style Dip

SIN 6: THE INVISIBLE BONUS

Make a selling point of the absence of ingredients that you wouldn't expect to be there in the first place.

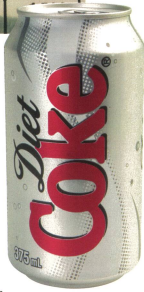
It would be rare canola or olive oil that contained cholesterol, considering that dietary cholesterol is only in foods of animal, not vegetable, origin. The same could be said for rice or breakfast cereals. But this doesn't stop some brands from having 'cholesterol-free' declarations on their labels. It may be true, but it shouldn't influence which brand you buy.



SIN 7: SNEAKY SERVINGS

Use serving sizes that show the product in a favourable light.

It's sometimes the case that you'd need to eat several individually wrapped portions to get what the manufacturer would call a 'single serve', or at the other extreme a single portion-sized packet might (according to the label) contain more than one serve. So where's the logic behind this?



DIET COKE is one of the worst offenders. A standard 375 mL can apparently contains 1.88 servings. Considering a can isn't resealable, you'd think it'd make more sense for the whole can to be a single serve, rather than just 200 mL. But then, of course, it wouldn't be able to make its famous 'less than 1 calorie per serve' claim.

Other products with odd serve sizes include **DAIRY FARMERS Traditional Natural Yogurt** (labelled as having 1.25 servings in a tub — despite claiming on the front of the label that it's a 'convenient single serve') — and **SUNBEAM Sultanas** (only 0.4 servings in a 40 g pack). In reality, both these items would be a full serve, but by labelling them this way, the manufacturer avoids having to put both per 100 g and per serve data on the nutrition information panel as it's one and the same. ■

Celebrity word of mouth

The endorsement of a trusted celebrity can improve the image of a brand no end. Athletes in particular are often used to promote brands — being the image of perfect health and fitness, they lend this image to the brand by mere association.

NESTLÉ uses this association to its advantage in its promotions fronted by Australian netball captain, Liz Ellis, under its new slogan of "Good Food, Good life". But the good image is tarnished somewhat by the fact that chocolates, ice cream, instant noodles and sweets make up a large proportion of **NESTLÉ**'s product range.

Slimline dishwashers...

... Not so slim for energy and water usage.

You might be thinking of buying a smaller dishwasher because you don't have space for a standard-sized one, or there are only two of you so a full-sized dishwasher seems a waste. But we'd advise thinking again, because in most cases a slimline dishwasher will cost you just as much to buy, if not more, than a standard one, and they don't save as much on water or energy as you might think. Most slimlines tested use as much water as an efficient full-sized model, and the same energy as an average full-sized model.

On test were four slimline models as well as the single-drawer **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer,** previously reported on as a full-sized double-drawer dishwasher. In the table (page 26) we've combined the results with those from our previous tests — 19 full-sized models that are still available.

BETTER OPTIONS

If you have the space for a full-sized dishwasher, you could buy one with a half-load option — most models tested have this feature (see the table for which ones do). With it you can wash a smaller load, with water savings of up to 50% as well as savings in time and electricity. It also means you can wash every day guilt-free, rather than waiting a couple of days until the dishwasher is full — and smelly, unless you've used yet more water rinsing off the dishes. And you've got a full-sized dishwasher when you need it.

The **ELECTROLUX, SIMPSON** and **DISHLEX DX302** models have a 'Quick 30' program that's essentially a half-load option that washes with less than 10 L of water. With it you can wash items in the whole dishwasher, not just the top or bottom basket, which maintains its versatility.

The **ASKO, HAIER, MAYTAG** and **WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM** will save around 4 L of water using their half-load options, but you can only wash items in either the top or bottom basket.

THE BEST FOR SMALL SPACES

The best performer and cheapest to buy and run for small spaces would be the single **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** — provided you have the standard width available (60 cm).

The **Dishdrawer** models have been upgraded since we tested — the new models should be appearing in stores around June/July this year. The newer versions have the same model numbers but the place settings have dropped from seven to six for the single drawer, and from 14 to 12 for the double drawer. According to the manufacturer this change helped improve the washing performance and energy and water efficiency.

If width is an issue, the 45 cm wide **MIELE G 611-3 SC Plus** and **BOSCH SRS5302AU** are good dishwashers but expensive to buy. The **MIELE** is the cheapest to run and the most energy-efficient — see the profiles on page 25 for details.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **All the slimline** *dishwashers in this test use a surprising amount of water and energy for their size.*
- **Most cost as much** *to buy and run as a standard-sized dishwasher, so don't buy one unless lack of space forces you to.*

SLIMLINE VS COMPACT

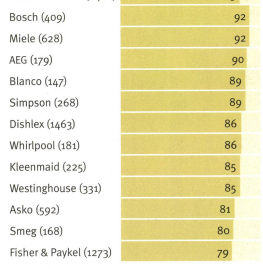
Slimline *models look like a standard dishwasher, but narrower — about 45 cm compared to 60 cm. They can be built-in or freestanding. A* ***compact*** *model can be wider than it is high (as in the case of the* ***FISHER & PAYKEL*** *single* ***Dishdrawer****) and often has to be built-in. Some can sit on a bench but may have to be anchored.*

How reliable have subscribers found them?

Of around 6500 subscribers who told us in last year's reliability survey about their dishwasher (bought in or after 1996), one in seven dishwashers had needed repair in the previous 12 months. This makes dishwashers one of the least reliable appliances in our survey.

The graph below shows the results for brands for which we received sufficient replies. A difference of 7% or more between brands is meaningful. The numbers in brackets show the number of responses.

Percentage not needing repair



WHAT TO BUY

12–14 place settings (standard)

BLANCO BFDW6W $1330
(see footnote (A), page 26, for similar models)

ELECTROLUX Gallery ESI 6110X (stainless steel) $1335
(see footnote (B), for similar models)

WESTINGHOUSE SB915WJ $1039
(see footnote (C), for similar models)

MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW $1259
(see footnote (D), for similar models)

AEG Favorit 60820 $1799
(see footnote (E), for similar models)

WESTINGHOUSE SB907WJ ◀BEST BUY▶ $829
(see footnote (F), for similar models)

WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM $1349

DISHLEX DX302WB $939
(see footnote (G), for similar models)

HAIER HDW101WH ◀BEST BUY▶ $649
(see footnote (H), for similar models)

6–9 place settings (slimline/compact)

FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DS603WZ (compact) ◀BEST BUY▶ $999
(see footnote (U), for similar models)

New **MIELE G 611-3SC Plus** (slimline) $1499
(see footnote (V), for similar models)

New **BOSCH SRS5302AU** (slimline) $1469

A Best Buy is a good performer whose purchase price and running costs combined are among the lowest in the test. Of the standard-sized models, the **HAIER HDW101WH** is a standout Best Buy with a purchase price plus 10-year running costs of less than $1400; all the other Best Buys total less than $1700 for this. However, we don't have any reliability information on the **HAIER** brand.

See *The best for small spaces*, page 23, for more on the slimline and compact models.

For people with a disability

A representative of the Independent Living Centre (NSW) assessed the dishwashers in our latest test to see which are better for people with various disabilities. We've combined her findings with those of previous tests to give you this update.

- For wheelchair users, a single **FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** positioned at a suitable height is the best option (you can install two if you need the equivalent of a full-sized dishwasher).
- If you have upper limb dysfunction, look for easy pushbutton controls, a door and detergent dispenser that are easy to open and close, and baskets that slide in and out readily. The **BLANCO BFDW6W** has a good detergent dispenser and the **ASKO's** bottom basket handle is a good feature. The **AEG Favorit, FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer** and the slimline **MIELE** are also good choices.
- People with poor vision need controls that are large and wide-spaced with labels in a contrasting colour to the background. Positive feedback — beeps and electronic lights — can also be useful, as are well defined baskets. The **SIMPSON Eziset 52B870, BLANCO BFDW6W** and slimline **MIELE** and **BOSCH** models rated well.
- Someone with a cognitive impairment would find the **WESTINGHOUSE SB907, SIMPSON Eziset 52B870,** and **BOSCH SGS4332AU** simple to use — each essentially has a one-touch start. The slimline **BOSCH SRS5302AU** also has simple controls.

Profiles

New models in the *What to buy* list are profiled here in rank order. For profiles of the standard-sized models see CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2005, July 2004, April 2004 and Jan/Feb 2004, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on the appropriate date under 'Dishwashers' in the index.

FISHER & PAYKEL DISHDRAWER DS603WZ

Price: $999
Type: Compact/drawer

GOOD POINTS

- Can fit tall glasses and large plates at the same time.
- Easy to use controls.
- Versatile basket design.
- Quick-wash option.
- Time-remaining display.
- Program progress indicator.
- Fault code display.
- Has a child-safety lock on the door.

BAD POINTS

- None to mention.

MIELE G 611-3SC PLUS

Price: $1499
Type: Slimline

GOOD POINTS

- Can fit tall glasses and large plates at the same time.
- The top basket is adjustable to three different positions without removing it, and it can be done when fully loaded.
- Has indicator lights to show the program sequence.
- Has a child-safety lock on the door.

BAD POINTS

- None to mention.

PROFILES: GEOFF AMBLER

BOSCH SRS5302AU

Price: $1469
Type: Slimline

GOOD POINTS

- Can fit tall glasses and large plates at the same time.
- Quick-wash option.
- The cutlery basket fits anywhere in the bottom basket.

BAD POINTS

- The top basket has to be removed to adjust its height.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

The slimline **BLANCO** can fit tall glasses and large plates at the same time and has a quick wash option, but isn't so good for energy and water efficiency — it used the most water and energy of all the slimline models.

The slimline **HAIER** is the cheapest to buy, but was particularly let down by its ease of use: it's difficult to load. Even with only six place settings, it can't fit large plates, the top basket has to be removed to adjust its height, and larger items, like dinner plates positioned at the front of the bottom basket, need careful positioning or the detergent dispenser can't open properly during the wash.

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE 1 Overall score (%)	2 Washing score (%)	3 Drying score (%)	4 Ease of use score (%)	5 Energy efficiency score (%)	6 Water efficiency score (%)	5 Energy used (kWh)*	6 Water used (L)*
12 TO 14 PLACE SETTINGS								
BLANCO BFDW6W **(A)**	82	77	98	77	69	83	1.32	16
ELECTROLUX Gallery ESI 6110X **(B)**	82	80	97	91	62	69	1.58	22
WESTINGHOUSE SB915WJ **(C)**	82	77	97	90	63	77	1.55	19
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW **(D)**	81	75	88	97	68	77	1.37	19
AEG Favorit 60820 **(E)**	80	72	96	100	64	66	1.51	23
WESTINGHOUSE SB907WJ **(F)**	80	75	94	90	63	75	1.53	20
WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM	80	75	79	88	82	81	0.91	17
DISHLEX DX302WB **(G)**	79	70	90	95	63	76	1.54	19
HAIER HDW101WH **(H)**	79	72	89	73	71	89	1.27	14
ASKO D3350 **(J)**	78	63	76	93	86	90	0.77	14
DISHLEX DX403WB **(K)**	78	78	92	98	56	58	1.78	26
SIMPSON Eziset 52B870WJ **(L)**	78	73	89	91	62	75	1.57	20
WESTINGHOUSE Virtuoso SB925SJ	78	78	94	90	57	57	1.75	26
BOSCH SGS4072AU **(M)**	77	77	94	69	63	69	1.52	22
DISHLEX DX102WB **(N)**	76	78	74	95	61	70	1.59	21
BOSCH SGS4332AU **(P)**	75	77	92	65	56	69	1.76	22
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603WZ **(Q) (R)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88	25
SIMPSON Eziset 52B850WJ **(S)**	75	75	74	95	60	69	1.64	22
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5540WH **(T)**	74	70	80	55	85	78	0.79	18
6 TO 9 PLACE SETTINGS								
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DS603WZ **(U) (R)**	78	75	94	80	61	70	0.94	13
† **MIELE** G 611-35C Plus **(V)**	77	74	82	73	84	69	0.63	16
† **BOSCH** SRS5302AU	76	80	93	68	61	62	1.21	18
† **BLANCO** BIDW405	72	72	91	74	57	54	1.29	21
† **HAIER** HDW6WH	68	69	92	33	64	66	0.75	11

MISSING BRAND

The new **ARISTON** slimline models weren't available in time for our test.

na *Not applicable*

MEA *Major Electrical Appliances.*

All the models in the table have the basic white finish except the ELECTROLUX Gallery ESI 6110X, which is stainless steel, the WHIRLPOOL 6ADG7554WHM, which is semi-integrated with a white control panel, and the slimline BLANCO BIDW405 which is fully integrated.

† *Newly tested models.*

* *"Normal" or auto-sense cycle.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in April 2005.*

(A) *Also available as the BFDW6X in stainess steel, $1451; and as the BSDW6X, which is freestanding with a worktop and a semi-integrated with a stainless steel control panel, $1402.*

(B) *Also available as the ESI 6110U with a textured aluminium finish, $1109.*

(C) *Also available as the SB915KJ with a black finish, $1039; and the SB915SJ with a stainless steel finish, $1149.*

(D) *Also available as the MJD3000AAW, which may be quieter and has extra features, $1399.*

(E) *Also available as the 86050Um with a stainless steel finish and built-in, $2139; and the semi-integrated 86050I with a stainless steel control panel, $1899.*

(F) *Also available as the SB907SJ with a stainless steel finish, $989.*

(G) *Also available as the DX302SB with a stainless steel finish, $1099.*

(H) *Also available as the HDW101SS with a stainless steel finish, $799.*

(J) *Also available as the D3350ss with a stainless steel finish, $2099; and the semi-integrated D3350it with a metal-grey control panel, $2099.*

(K) *Also available as the DX403WB, semi-integrated with a white control panel, $1249; and the DX403SB with a stainless steel finish, $1249.*

(L) *Also available as the 52B870SJ with a stainless steel finish, $989.*

(M) *Also available as the SGU4025AU with a stainless steel finish, $1299. Both models will be replaced in the second half of the year.*

(N) *Also available as the DX102SB with a stainless steel finish, $939.*

(P) *To be replaced in the second half of the year. Also available as the SGU4335AU with a stainless steel finish, $1299, which will continue to be available.*

(Q) *Also available as the DD603I, an integrated model, $1899; DD603SS with a stainless steel finish, $1899; and DD603M with an iridium finish, $1999.*

(R) *The manufacturer tells us these models have been upgraded, with improved performance; the new version has been available from June 2005. The model numbers stay the same but you can tell the models apart by the number of stated place settings: now six for the single drawer and 12 for the double drawer.*

(S) *Also available as the 52B850SJ with a stainless steel finish, $889.*

(T) *Also available as the 6ADP854OIX with a stainless steel finish, $1199.*

(U) *Also available as the DS603I, an integrated model, $1049; DS603SS with a stainless steel finish, $1149; and DS603M with an iridium finish, $1199.*

(V) *Also available as the G 611-35CI Plus, a stainless steel or semi-integrated model with a white, black or stainless steel control panel, $1699.*

(W) *Has load sensing and/or a dirt sensor, which optimises water, energy and time for every wash.*

		8 FEATURES					SPECIFICATIONS							COSTS	
7 Noise (dB)*	Cycle time (minutes)*	Height-adjustable top basket	Foldable / removable tines	Anti-flood device	Half-load option	Concealed element	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)	9 Water connection	Place settings	10 Type	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	11 Running cost ($ / 10 years)	Price ($)**
44	127	✓		✓	(W)	✓	82 x 60 x 57	C rec	12	FW	2	France	MEA	724	1330
52	107	✓		✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	2	Italy	Electrolux	865	1335
47	106	✓	F	✓		✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	849	1039
48	94	✓	F, R	✓	✓	✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW / BI	2	Italy	Maytag	750	1259
46	112	✓	F	✓	(W)	✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW	3	Germany	Andi Co	827	1799
47	106	✓	F	✓		✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	838	829
47	97	✓	F, R	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 56	H or C	12	BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool	476	1349
47	105	✓	F	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 61	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	843	939
47	133	✓		✓	✓		85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW	2	China	Haier Electronics	696	649
44	96		F	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 57	H or C	14	BI	2	Sweden	Asko	423	1999
46	121	✓	F	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	972	1149
48	102	✓		✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	861	889
46	124	✓	F	✓	(W)	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux	958	1249
46	114	✓				✓	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	14	FW / BI	2	Germany	Bosch	833	999
48	116	✓	F	✓		✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	1	Australia	Electrolux	872	809
43	97	✓				✓	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	14	FW	2	Germany	Bosch	963	1099
47	118		R	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	14	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1028	1699
48	116	✓	F	✓	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	1	Australia	Electrolux	895	729
51	79					✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW / BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool	431	949
47	118	na	R	✓		✓	41 x 60 x 58	C rec	7	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	560	999
44	111	✓	F	✓		✓	85 x 45 x 60	H or C	9	FW	2	Germany	Miele	406	1499
46	94	✓	F	✓		✓	81 x 45 x 55	C only	9	FW	2	Germany	Bosch	730	1469
53	78	✓	F	✓			82 x 45 x 56	C rec	9	BI	2	Italy	MEA	783	1468
54	122	✓					80 x 45 x 50	C rec	6	FW	2	China	Haier Electronics	451	799

1 Overall score

This is based on the following scores and weightings:

- Washing performance: 30%
- Drying performance: 25%
- Ease of use: 15%
- Energy efficiency: 15%
- Water efficiency: 15%

Notes 2–7

See notes 2-7 with the table in CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2004 to see what we tested and measured for these scores. Or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Jan/Feb 04 under 'Dishwashers' in the index.

8 Features

See the Jan/Feb 2004 issue for more on the features listed.

'R' means the tines are removable, 'F' that they can be folded down.

9 Water connection

- H or C: You can connect the dishwasher to hot or cold water.
- C rec: The manufacturer recommends connection to a cold tap, and the dishwasher heats the water itself (all dishwashers have a heater).
- C only: You can only connect to a cold tap.

See the Jan/Feb 2004 article or go to www.choiceextra.com.au for the pros and cons of connection to hot or cold water.

10 Type

- FW: Freestanding, with a worktop (can generally be built-in as well).
- BI: Built-in (some mightn't have top or side outer panels). Most of these will have to be anchored or wedged into place so that they don't tip when the baskets are pulled out.

Some models are also available as semi-integrated (you can fit a front panel to the door to match the rest of your kitchen cupboard doors) or fully integrated (the whole front of the machine can match your kitchen, with the controls hidden inside the door). See the table footnotes for availability details.

11 10-year running costs

These are calculated at a rate of 15 cents per kWh and $1 per 1000 L, running a full load on the 'normal' or auto-sense cycle every day. A 10-year period provides a useful indication of the long-term differences between high and low water and energy usage — and you should be able to expect your dishwasher to last at least that long.

EXTRA INFO

For a general guide to what to look for in a dishwasher and more information on the features of the dishwashers in our table, go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on any of the articles under 'Dishwashers' in the index.

On choiceextra you also have access to our 'Compare-a-product' feature, to help you choose a model that'll suit your requirements.

If you don't have access to the internet, our article in Jan/Feb 2004 gives general information about what to look for in a dishwasher. If you don't have this back issue (or the ones mentioned under *Profiles*, page 25) and you're a personal subscriber to CHOICE, phone our Consumer Services people on 1800 069 552 and ask them to send you a copy.

DISHWASHER DETERGENT DANGER

Adults might have trouble opening them, but unfortunately kids ***can*** get into some 'child-resistant' caps.

IN A NUTSHELL

Dishwasher detergent *is alkaline — it can be extremely caustic and burn if swallowed. Don't rely on supposedly child-resistant caps or packaging: keep it well out of reach.*

Ten days before Christmas last year, an 18-month-old Queensland toddler suffered horrific injuries when he swallowed highly caustic dishwasher detergent. For just a brief moment Harrison had wandered out of his mum's sight and grabbed a bottle of **MORNING FRESH Ultra Shine with Baking Soda** from a cupboard under the sink. The detergent burnt away his epiglottis — the valve-like structure at the back of the throat that stops food and drink getting into the windpipe — and left the toddler with a legacy of medical problems for the rest of his life.

Sadly, child poisoning cases involving household chemicals are far from unusual. According to Kidsafe (the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia), about 50 children are admitted to hospital each week because of poisoning, and each year, between five and 10 children die from poisoning. One in three childhood poisonings are associated with medicines; household chemicals are the other main cause.

Only Queensland and Victoria have special units that monitor presentations to emergency departments, but the numbers recorded there of child poisonings associated with dishwasher detergent are appallingly high.

In the six-year period to the end of 2004, the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit at the Mater Hospital (which collects data from 15 different emergency departments) recorded 76 cases where children had swallowed dishwasher detergent (an average of 13 per year); the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (which records data from 28 hospitals) identified 207 cases over eight years to mid 2004 (an average of 26 per year). And in New Zealand our sister organisation reported in March that since June 2002, 615 incidents had been reported of children swallowing dishwasher detergent powder, including five over the previous five months with severe burns to the mouth, throat and airways.

DREW FITZGIBBON

Harrison's parents hope the media coverage their son's tragedy attracted will at least make people more aware of the dangers of dishwasher detergent powder to small children. "I have five kids and had no idea the product was so caustic," Harrison's mother, Lisa Clark said. They'd like to see all types of dishwasher detergent sold with effective child-resistant closures (like on medicine bottles), packaging more tightly controlled and the formulations changed to make all dishwasher detergents less corrosive.

According to Kidsafe Australia, a general problem in more than half of all child poisonings is the fact that the container wasn't properly closed, or not stored in a cupboard or enclosed space; that the substance wasn't in a child-resistant container was an even more common factor.

TWO CLICKS TO CLOSE

Child-resistant closures (CRCs) are designed to restrict access to substances that could be dangerous to children. They should make it difficult for a youngster to open the container, but not too tricky for an adult to reseal it, otherwise it's likely it won't always be resealed properly after use.

As far as dishwasher detergent bottles are concerned, not all their CRCs are designed the same way, and they're generally easier to open than, say, a medicine bottle. You generally have to squeeze and turn the cap to open the bottle, but with some, to reseal it you must turn the cap till it's clicked into place *twice*.

Unfortunately this instruction was nowhere stated on the bottle when Harrison swallowed the detergent last December. Even more disturbingly, when we bought the bottles pictured below in April this year, four months later, the same bottle he had grabbed was still being sold without any instructions on how to close it securely. Many of the staff here at CHOICE were unaware of the 'two clicks to close' mechanism — would you have known?

While child-resistant closures have reduced the number of child poisonings over the years, the large number of reported incidents involving children and dishwasher detergent shows two things: that people aren't aware of the potential dangers, and that some closures are simply not good enough.

In Queensland, the tragic incident late last year has prompted the establishment of a working party, with representatives from Kidsafe Queensland and the state's health and poisons units, to take a closer look at the issue and discuss how packaging could be improved.

When we talked to manufacturers in April, they finally seem to have been prompted into long overdue action, redesigning their products' packaging. Cussons told us from late May/early June this year its **MORNING FRESH** dishwasher powder would have a 'Clic-Loc' CRC that wouldn't need to be clicked twice, just closed tightly like a medicine bottle. Cussons also advised it would put a label — "2 clicks to close" — on the current bottle closure so people can distinguish between the two types.

Reckitt Benckiser's **FINISH** powder packaging is also currently undergoing change, including a new bottle closure due mid-year. However, its **KWIT** powder bottle won't change design "in the short term" but will feature the new **FINISH** closure "in the medium term". And if you currently buy **CASTLE** dishwasher detergent in the 2 kg bottle, its closure will also be changed to the one currently on the 1 kg bottle.

And of course you can even still buy dishwasher detergent in simple cardboard boxes that aren't child-resistant at all.

USING DISHWASHER DETERGENT SAFELY

- Always close the container properly — test that the cap is locked in place.
- Store the detergent out of reach of young children, on a high shelf or in a locked cupboard, and put it back there as soon as you've finished using it.
- Put detergent in the dishwasher just before the wash, and if there's any residue, clean it out afterwards — children have been known to scrape the leftover goop out of the dispenser and eat it.
- Ask grandparents, nannies and others who look after your children to follow your detergent rules — at your home and theirs, if the kids are likely to visit.
- Some detergents are based on enzymes and oxygen bleach, which are less alkaline (and therefore less caustic) than the 'alkaline salts' you'll find on the label of others. **FINISH**, **KWIT**, **CASTLE** and many detergent tablets are examples. They have a lower pH and are likely to cause less severe injuries when swallowed. Products based on alkaline salts must carry the warning BURNS SKIN AND THROAT when they have a pH of more than 11.5. Enzyme-based products, on the other hand, are labelled IRRITANT. Don't get complacent with them, though — they can still cause harm. ■

FIRST AID

If you think your child has swallowed a corrosive, burning poison (such as dishwasher detergent, acid, caustic oven cleaner, swimming pool chemicals and some disinfectants), seek urgent medical help. Signs of poisoning include red lips, blisters, possible breathlessness and coughing, swelling inside the mouth and severe pain. Don't induce vomiting and give nothing to eat or drink. Wash any burning substance off the mouth and face with water.

While all these products comply with legislative requirements for labelling, we think the closing mechanism needs to be explained on the bottle (two clicks to secure) and the cautions should stand out more prominently (in red, or in a box) on highly alkaline products such as Morning Fresh Ultra Shine with Baking Soda, left, which can do much more harm when swallowed than less alkaline products such as the other detergents pictured (see* Using dishwasher detergent safely, *above).

GENE ROSS

More safe car models

Drivers and passengers are safer, but no joy for pedestrians.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **More and more car** *models score very well in ANCAP high-speed crash tests, partly due to side and head airbags becoming more widely available.*
- **Pedestrian protection** *is still a major weakness of most cars.*

MORE ONLINE

For a limited time you'll have free access to detailed results from this latest round of ANCAP crash testing, as well as the results for all the cars tested since the start of the program. Go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on 'ANCAP' under 'Cars' in the index.

The Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) has released high-speed crash test results for a number of models tested in Europe but also available here.

The good news is that more and more models achieve very high ratings, partly due to side and head airbags for the driver and front passenger becoming more available — even in smaller cars such as the **HOLDEN Astra CDXi** and **VW Golf**.

Both types of airbag are designed to offer protection in side impacts: side airbags for the body, head airbags (also called curtain or head-protecting side airbags) for the head.

CHOICE would like to see car manufacturers make these airbags available across their entire model range as quickly as possible.

While there are a few encouraging results, pedestrian protection is still a weakness of most models. We'd like to see manufacturers urgently start giving more thought to the protection of pedestrians struck by a car.

WHAT'S TESTED?

The test consists of two main crashes:

- **Offset crash:** The car is crashed at 64 km/h into a fixed barrier with a crushable aluminium face. Only 40% of the car's front (on the driver's side) hits the barrier. This simulates crashing into another car.
- **Side-impact crash:** A 950 kg trolley is run into the driver's side of the stationary car at 50 km/h.

This test simulates a fairly small car striking the driver's door. Test models with a relatively high seating position, such as four-wheel drives, can be expected to perform well in this test.

Two further tests can be included to get the overall score:

- Models with head-protecting side airbags are eligible for an optional **pole test**, which can earn additional points for a low risk of head injury. This test simulates a vehicle sliding sideways into a pole at 29 km/h and hitting it in line with the head of the seated driver.
- Models with an **advanced seatbelt warning system** can earn additional points. The system has to meet a range of requirements, such as detecting which seats are taken, whether the seatbelts in those seats are used, and whether the car is in use. If any of the seatbelts for occupied seats aren't used, the system needs to give a visual and audible warning signal.

There's also a **pedestrian impact test** to estimate injuries to pedestrians struck by a vehicle at 40 km/h. This isn't part of the overall score, but is reported separately in the table: the higher the score, the better the protection.

WHAT'S ASSESSED?

The **overall rating** is based on the following assessments from the above tests:

- The car's **structure**: among other things, does the passenger compartment keep its shape, and how far are the steering column and pedals pushed inwards?
- The car's **restraint system**: for example, do the driver and passenger hit any hard parts of the car?
- **Injury risks**, using crash test dummies fitted with sensors that measure forces and movements.

Crash test results are only comparable for vehicles within the same category.

Make / model / year / engine size (airbags) ranked in order of overall rating (A)	Overall rating (%)	Pedestrian rating (%)
SMALL CARS		
RENAULT Scenic II, 2005 on, 1.5 L (front, side, head)	92	30
HOLDEN Astra CDXi, 2004 on, 1.6 L (front, side, head) **(B)**	91	8
BMW 1 Series, 2004 on, 2.0 L (front, side, head) **(C)**	90	6
VW Golf, 2005 on, 1.6 L (front, side, head)	89	52
HOLDEN Astra CD/CDX, 2004 on, 1.6 L (front, side) **(B)**	85	8
MEDIUM CARS		
CITROEN C5, 2005 on, 2.0 L (front, side, head)	97	21
PEUGEOT 407, 2004 on, 2.0 L (front, side, head)	91	41
LUXURY CARS		
AUDI A6, 2004 on, 2.0 L diesel (front, side, head)	90	8
BMW 5 Series, 2004 on, 2.2 L (front, side, head)	78	6
LARGE 4WD		
VW Touareg, 2005 on, 2.5 L diesel (front, side, head)	93	20

Source: Crash test data from the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), which is funded by Australian and New Zealand motoring clubs, all Australian state governments, the New Zealand Government and the FIA Foundation.

(A) *Unless otherwise stated, the left-hand-drive European model was tested by EuroNCAP. Australian specifications may vary and models sold in Australia might provide slightly different levels of protection to those described.*

(B) *The Opel/Vauxhall Astra was tested. It's sold as a Holden in Australia.*

(C) *The right-hand drive European model was tested by EuroNCAP. Australian specifications may vary and models sold in Australia might provide slightly different levels of protection to those described.*

GENE ROSS

Home loans from your newsagent

A visit to your local newsagent to buy the newspaper could see you come away with a home loan. Finance companies Homestar and SAVE are now selling home loans through some local newsagencies. Newsagents are being offered the opportunity to promote mortgages to you over the counter, based on a system of commissions and incentives.

The trend follows the lead of financial services companies in the UK, where some financial products are being sold at 'point of sale' locations in supermarkets and other stores. Major supermarket chains are offering discount financial products, such as loans, travel, home and car insurance, and credit cards often carrying the supermarket's branding.

While such products may seem cheap and convenient, they shouldn't be accepted lightly. You should be very wary of entering any serious contract, such as a home loan, without doing your homework. Consider whether the lenders are members of accredited industry associations and whether access to independent dispute resolution services is available. Always check all the terms and conditions and compare other products before making such a big financial commitment. Remember **easy is not always best**.

NEW HEALTH REBATE

How does the new health insurance rebate for older Australians work?

Since 1 April, Australians aged 65 and over have been entitled to an increased rebate on their private health insurance premiums. If you're between 65 and 69 your rebate has increased from 30% to 35%; it's increased to 40% if you're 70 or over.

It works very much like the existing rebate: you can claim it directly from your health fund as a reduction in the premium you pay, claim it back as a direct payment from Medicare or claim it in your tax return.

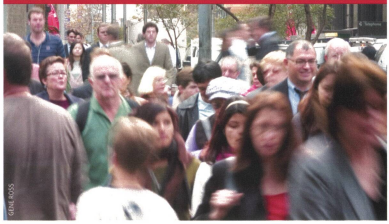
If you're already in a fund and get a premium reduction the new rebate should apply automatically.

If you have a couple or family policy, the full rebate for the age of the oldest member applies to the entire policy.

WANT MORE MONEY INFO?

CHOICE *Money & Rights* magazine is published six times a year and contains more information on money topics (and your consumer rights) than we could ever fit into CHOICE. To subscribe call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.

Over 550,000 affected by heavy super exit penalties



According to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) at least 550,000 people have older-style super funds (called 'legacy' products) and may face heavy exit penalties if they try to leave those funds. Legacy funds were mainly sold by life insurance companies and have high upfront and exit fees, used by the life companies to pay commissions to their agents. Super is not really sold in this way any more.

On average, members have to stay in a fund for 15 years before they can take their money out without paying an exit penalty. The average exit fee would be $1700, with some members facing significantly higher fees.

Before withdrawing your super from one of these products, it's worth asking your fund to waive or reduce your exit fee. The fund can also offer:

- To switch you to a newer-style super fund with shorter-term expiry fees and other features.
- To allow you to withdraw part of your money without a fee.
- New features or other incentives to make the product more attractive.

PHOTOS: GRAE KOSS

Short and sweet

It's not just Mama's little baby who loves short'nin' bread!

There's something special about a good shortbread. Perhaps it's the way it can crumble and melt in your mouth, or the guilty pleasure you get from indulging in such a rich treat. Or maybe it's just its simple, buttery flavour. Whatever the case, it's a perfect accompaniment to a cuppa, so being keen advocates of morning and afternoon tea here at CHOICE, we went in search of the best shortbreads to honour these occasions.

BUTTER UP

Of the 19 shortbreads rated by our Home Testers, the four pictured on the right were the favourites, described variously as tasting sweet, buttery and/or rich and with a texture that was crumbly, crunchy, dense, soft and/or light.

Compared to these top shortbreads, the lower scorers didn't meet our Home Testers' expectations of a 'real' shortbread in taste, texture or appearance. So what was

1 Brand / product (in rank order)	2 Overall rating (%)	Butter content (%)	Ingredients	3 Price per 100 g ($)
COLES Shortbread Rounds	72	32	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, salt	1.50
CRIPPS Premium Tasmanian Shortbread **(A)**	70	33	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	3.25
ARNOTT'S Glengarry Original Butter Shortbread	69	32	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	1.33
COLES Shortbread Fingers	69	32	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, salt	1.23
UNIBIC Viennese Crescent	65	28	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, almond meal, egg, raising agents, flavour	1.90
WALKERS Pure Butter Shortbread	65	31	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, salt	1.37
AUSTRALIA'S CHOICE Shortbread (KMart)	64	33 **(B)**	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	1.00
BUTTERFINGERS Pure Butter Shortbread	64	30	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	1.37
BYRON BAY COOKIE COMPANY Shortbread Traditional	64	40 **(B)**	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, wheaten cornflour, rice flour	6.33
FARMLAND Butter Shortbread Biscuits	63	27	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	1.20
WALKERS Pure Butter Shortbread Rounds	63	32	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, salt	1.98
PARKWOOD Butter Shortbread (Aldi)	62	30	Wheat flour, butter, sugar	1.00
ARNOTT'S Arno Shortbread	58	14 **(B)**	Wheat flour, sugar, butter, vegetable oil, egg, salt, condensed milk, milk solids, raising agent, flavouring, emulsifier	0.96
UNIBIC Parisienne Butter Shortbread	53	27	Wheat flour, sugar, butter, egg	1.71
PARADISE Rich Shortbread Traditional	51	4	Wheat flour, sugar, vegetable fats or oils, margarine, butter, sweetened condensed milk, egg, milk powder, salt, raising agents, flavour	0.49
ARNOTT'S Farmbake Cookies Butter Shortbread	50	18	Wheat flour, butter, sugar, vegetable oil, emulsifier, salt, flavouring, egg	0.71
COLES Shortbread Fingers (from instore bakery)	50	17 **(B)**	Wheat flour, sugar, butter, vegetable margarine, vegetable oils, water, salt, emulsifiers, flavour, antioxidant, food acids, colour, rice flour, water, flavour	0.71
FARMLAND Shortbread Cookies	48	12	Wheat flour, sugar, butter, margarine, whole egg, milk solids, salt, raising agents, flavour	0.40
BI-LO Shortbread Cookies	47	12	Wheat flour, sugar, butter, margarine, whole egg, milk solids, salt, raising agents, flavour	0.40

the main difference between the ones people liked and the ones they didn't? It's simple really: the ingredients.

First, the top-rating products all contain more than 30% butter, with the proportion of butter in the less popular biscuits dwindling to as low as 4%.

Second, the more popular products all have fewer ingredients, closer to a traditional shortbread recipe (see *A short history*, right, for more). The lowest-rating brands mostly had longer ingredient lists that included non-traditional ingredients like vegetable oil, emulsifiers, egg and flavour.

Obviously something to bear in mind when you're next out buying shortbread!

SCOT-FREE?

Tartan on a box of shortbread may suggest it's Scottish in origin, but don't assume that's the case — three of the five tartan-wrapped shortbreads in our trial are in fact Australian-made. ■

(A) *Previously Mrs McNally's; only the brand name and packaging have changed.*
(B) *This information isn't stated on the packaging, but was given to us by the manufacturer.*

1 Brand/product

We bought all the products labelled 'shortbread' that we could find in supermarkets, grocers and department store food halls. We couldn't test them all, so we picked products that at least contain the traditional shortbread ingredients flour, butter and sugar. Flavoured varieties (as denoted by the product name — for example, butterscotch, macadamia or choc chip shortbread) were excluded, as were ones that are only sold around Christmas. The ingredients and butter content given are those listed on the product packaging, unless stated otherwise.

2 Overall rating

This is based on the tasters' overall impression of the shortbread. They were also asked to rate the shortbreads specifically for taste, texture and appearance, and these ratings tended to follow the same pattern as the overall scores.

3 Price per 100 g

As the packet sizes vary, we calculated the price per 100 g for ease of comparison (based on what we paid in February 2005).

CHOICE HOME TESTER

THE TASTE TEST

Thank you to the 220 Home Testers who took part in this trial, throwing caution to the wind by indulging in these buttery treats.

We sent each of them five brands of shortbread; each brand was tasted by about 50 people. Samples were sent wrapped in plastic and identified only by a code number so that the trialists couldn't recognise the brands.

A SHORT HISTORY

The origin of shortbread dates back to Scotland in medieval times.

Traditionally, shortbread was baked in a large round and served cut from the centre into triangles (and you can still find it made like this today). It's thought to be a relic of the ancient New Year sun cakes (a legacy of Scotland's close association with Scandinavia) that were baked with a hole in the centre and symmetrical lines around it representing the rays of the sun.

The traditional recipe is one part sugar, two parts shortening (butter) and three parts flour (originally fine oatmeal — a staple Scottish ingredient — but now wheat flour). Other ingredients are sometimes added for taste or, like cornflour or rice flour, to lighten the texture.

Get shorty

The word 'shortening' has been used since the early 19th century to describe fats (such as butter) or oils that 'shorten' a dough, making the final product more crumbly or friable. This role is most evident in shortcrust pastry (used to make pies), but is also the reason why buttery, crumbly shortbread got its name.

THE BEST BIKKIES

COLES SHORTBREAD ROUNDS

"A very pleasant-tasting and textured shortbread — traditional."
"Tastes like shortbread should taste."

CRIPPS PREMIUM TASMANIAN SHORTBREAD

(Formerly **MRS McNALLY'S**, but the same recipe.)
"This had the butteriest taste so scored the highest for that reason."
"Yummy! Looks home-made."

ARNOTT'S GLENGARRY ORIGINAL BUTTER SHORTBREAD

"I liked this one a lot — the texture was between hard and crunchy."
"More golden/well done appearance. Liked the sugar sprinkles."

COLES SHORTBREAD FINGERS

"Traditional thick buttery shortbread."
"I really liked it 'cos it wasn't too sweet and not really crumbly like some shortbreads."

CHOOSING AN OVEN

Ovens aren't simple any more — our buying guide takes you through the choices.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **The pros and cons** *of gas vs electricity, and the different oven layouts to consider.*
- **Self-cleaning,** *steam ovens and automatic cooking programs: a roundup of the latest in oven technology.*

You could spend hours walking around kitchen showrooms, admiring the increasingly sleek ovens on offer. You can take your pick from fingermark-proof stainless steel, aluminium or iridium finishes, ovens in country-style green or cream, or authentically commercial-looking stainless steel freestanding stoves (oven and cooktop combined) with gas hobs and cast iron trivets.

But while looks may be important, they're only one of many things to think about when buying an oven. To keep you on track and increase your chances of getting exactly the oven you want, use the following as a guide.

GAS VS ELECTRIC

If you're open to either option, here are some things to consider. However, the bottom line is that if you're willing to experiment with your oven, you'll learn how to get a good result regardless of its fuel.

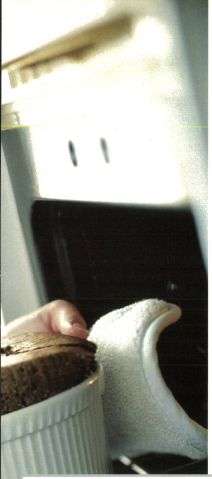
About electric

- Older electric ovens had a reputation for taking longer than gas ovens to heat up and cook, but in fact they've markedly improved over the years, so this is no longer relevant.
- Most electric ovens these days are multifunction, meaning you can use a combination of top, bottom, grill and sometimes rear elements plus a fan to optimise different cooking, baking and grilling needs, so they tend to be more versatile than a gas oven.
- The price range for electric ovens starts lower.

About gas

- Gas ovens don't tend to dry food out as much as electric ovens (unless they're fan-assisted), so they're ideal for roasts, casseroles and heavy cakes that require moisture.
- Gas ovens are naturally hotter at the top and cooler at the bottom, so unless there's a fan, food will need to be rotated to get even cooking and browning if you're doing any multi-shelf cooking. However, it does mean you can cook several different foods at once. For example, after a roast has been in the oven for some time, you can move it to the bottom, turn the heat up, and use the top shelf to crisp the potatoes.
- There's no direct heat from the top in a gas oven (unless it has an internal grill) so it may not be as good as an electric oven for foods that need browning or crisping on top.
- A gas oven may have electronic controls and/or an electric grill, in which case you'll need an electrical outlet nearby.
- There are only a few brands of gas oven on the market, meaning less choice for you.
- There are differing environmental factors between gas and electricity you can consider too (see *Choosing a cooktop* in CHOICE, October 2004, for more on this), or look under 'Cooktops' on www.choiceextra.com.au.

PHOTOLIBRARY



Self-cleaning ovens

True self-cleaning ovens are **pyrolytic**. Set on the cleaning mode, the oven locks itself and heats up to around 500°C, converting food residues into ash, which you just wipe away when it cools. The easy cleaning comes at a price, though. **Typical prices:** $2000–$5000 (single oven) up to $7000 (double oven).

Often referred to as 'self-cleaning' surfaces, **catalytic liners** work by absorbing fat splatters. For the liners to work well, you need to regularly heat the empty oven to 250°C for an hour to burn off the splatters and, when cool, wipe the liners with a damp cloth. Properly cared for, they should last a long time, but may eventually need replacing — at an additional cost. Ovens that have catalytic liners are those in the mid to upper end within each oven category on pages 34–37.

What to look for — oven features and functions

DOOR

- An oven door that's light and easy to open, and stays open in any position (without falling fully open or slamming shut).
- A large enough window for a clear view inside.
- With a side-opening door you don't have to reach the food over a hot oven door. It's a particularly good option for wheelchair users (see *For people with a disability*, page ??), but there are only a few on the market. **Typical prices:** $800–$900 (**ELECTROLUX**), $1950 (**BOSCH**), $1700–$2000 (**ASKO**).

INSIDE

- Capacity — check the usable space rather than going by the stated capacity.
- An interior light — check when buying that the bulb is easy to replace.
- Shelves should have safety stops to prevent them being pulled out accidentally.
- A good range of shelf positions. Three or more shelves may be handy, especially if you often cook several items at the same time.
- Shelves that don't slope down when pulled out with the weight of a casserole or baking dish on them. If shelves do slope, a guard at the front will help stop dishes falling off, but may make it harder to slide heavy baking dishes in and out.

GRILL

- A smokeless grill tray that traps fat and grease below it, rather than a wire rack — important for ovens with an internal grill, as spattering and smoking fat can be messy.
- A grill tray that's easy to slide in and out and comes out far enough to let you easily manipulate food at the back of the tray. Look for a safety stop mechanism to stop it pulling right out.
- A grill element that's set high into the ceiling or has a shield in front, so that it can't easily come into contact with your fingers.
- At least two grill tray heights.

OVEN AND GRILL FUNCTIONS

Unlike with a gas oven, there are many variations and combinations of heating methods that can make an electric oven multifunction — many of which you're likely to use only rarely. According to CHOICE's home economist, the most useful are:

- **Classic or base bake**. This is where heat comes from the bottom element only. It's particularly recommended for foods like pizzas and quiches, to get crispy, rather than soggy, dough and pastry bases.
- **Top and bottom elements** (also called 'conventional bake'). This is standard convection baking. It provides reasonably even heating, but the temperature tends to be slightly hotter towards the top, allowing food to brown on top. It's good for cooking scones, muffins, sponge cakes, fruit cakes, baked custards, pastry, meringues, roasts and casseroles.
- **Fan-forced bake**. Heat comes from an element at the back of the oven and is circulated by a fan surrounded by the element. The oven heats relatively quickly and efficiently, and heat is distributed evenly throughout, which is helpful for multi-shelf cooking. It's similar to conventional bake, and good for similar foods, but it's faster, with more even heat distribution.

For more information on these and other oven and grill functions, see CHOICE, July 2004, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Jul 04 under 'Ovens' in the index.

The Galaxy freestanding double oven with gas hobs from Fisher & Paykel: $7799.

DIFFERENT OVEN LAYOUTS: PROS AND CONS

Built-in vs freestanding

A built-in oven gives you more flexibility with your kitchen layout — you don't have to put it under your cooktop, and it can fit either under-bench or in the wall. It can also be positioned at your preferred height to minimise bending or squatting and make cleaning easier. But a built-in oven with a separate cooktop may take up more bench space than a freestanding stove, depending on the layout.

If your kitchen is small, freestanding stoves are available 50–60 cm wide, which may fit better. Make sure it's installed correctly, with wall brackets if applicable (see *Tipping stoves*, CHOICE, November 2004).

Typical prices: Built-in oven (60 cm wide) $900–$1100 (gas), $630–$2000 (electric), although you can pay up to $4300 for a top-of-the-range MIELE. Freestanding stove (50–60 cm) $750–$1950 (gas), $650–$2200 (electric).

But it's not just about your kitchen layout — you also need to check the oven capacity when buying to make sure you're getting the size that meets your needs. Although Christmas only comes once a year, you may want to base your decision on the size of your annual turkey. A more practical approach is to take your favourite or largest baking dish with you when choosing a model.

Double ovens

A double oven is usually two distinct ovens, each with its own door and functions, stacked one on top of the other as one unit. However, as the photo on the left shows, there are side-by-side versions if your kitchen has the space.

They're excellent for entertainers or large families who like to bake lots of different types of food. They're versatile, as you can bake and grill different dishes at the same time, or bake two things that require different cooking temperatures and functions.

If you cook large quantities of food at a time, a standard-width (60 cm) double oven can have much more space than a single extra-wide (90 cm) oven — around 164 L, compared to 118 L. Of course, if you want double the capacity but don't fancy paying the price of a double oven, a cheaper alternative may be to install two single ovens — subject to your electricity circuit(s).

1½ ovens — sometimes referred to as single plus secondary oven — provide similar versatility to double ovens (and may be referred to as double ovens too, so

For people with a disability

The Independent Living Centre NSW, provides the following guidelines for buying ovens:

For wheelchair users

Control panels and door handles should be easy to reach from the wheelchair.

Wall ovens generally need to be installed at slightly lower than normal height, within the user's reach range.

Side-opening doors are more user-friendly.

For upper limb impairment

Look for doors that are easy to open, and handles that allow a good grip.

Easy-to-press buttons may be preferable to rotary knobs. Any knobs should be large and easy to turn, with little resistance.

Choose appliances with shelves and trays that move very easily and aren't heavy.

Place the oven at chest height to avoid excessive reaching.

For visual impairment

Controls that are large and wide-spaced, and labels in a contrasting colour.

Positive feedback — beeps and electronic lights — can be helpful.

For back pain

It's best to minimise bending and reaching, so avoid appliances with controls at the back.

A wall oven installed at chest height is preferable to a freestanding oven.

For cognitive impairment

The key is to keep it simple. Labelling that has a very clear and simple picture may be more useful than words, but this will vary for different people.

Choose appliances with few options for the controls.

Avoid appliances with auditory feedback if this might confuse the user. However, it can be useful if it successfully reminds them to do something.

be wary). However, the secondary oven tends to have limited functions (generally classic bake and grill) and only one shelf. For single or small items, though, using the secondary oven is likely to save on preheat and cooking time, as well as energy.

▮ Typical prices: Double ovens $2100–$3200; 1½ ovens $1900–$2100, although you can pay up to $4120 for an AEG model.

Extra-wide ovens

▮ If you're completely renovating your kitchen and styling is all-important, you might want to go for a flash extra-wide oven. The 70–80 cm width is excellent for fitting extra-large trays and great for large batches of cooking. And it might surprise you that while 90 cm models are externally wider, 70–80 cm ovens often have the same internal usable volume. Like standard-width ovens, extra-wide ovens can be single, double and freestanding.

▮ Typical prices: built-in single $2020–$5000 (70–80 cm), $2400–$4800 (90 cm); built-in double $7000 (70–80 cm); freestanding single $1465 (70–80 cm), $2200–$5700 (90 cm); freestanding double (such as in the photo, far left) $5000–$6600 (90 cm).

Internal vs external grill

An external grill is more versatile, as you can grill one item while you roast or bake another at the same time. It also isolates the mess, so the main oven cavity stays cleaner. Open-door grilling tends to give a better result than closed-door grilling, which can steam food, for example making meat tough.

However, an internal grill is more common, takes up less space and can give more direct heat for certain types of cooking, such as au gratins.

▮ Typical prices for ovens with an external grill (single, built-in): $1100–$1200 (gas oven, but electric grill); $850–$1100 (electric). ■

Extra-wide (76 cm) built-in oven from Fisher & Paykel: $5349.

The new-look cook

A new generation of ovens claims to offer quicker cooking times and/or healthier food. So how do they work?

LIGHT

▮ Take a combination convection/grill/microwave oven, add a halogen lamp and you have the **LG SolarDom Light Oven** (around $1500). Despite the name, it doesn't cook using just light — the light's main purpose is to assist browning and heating on some preset functions only. However, it does reduce the cooking times of some foods a bit. See our review in CHOICE, November 2003, for details.

▮ New on the market, the **BOSCH Light Speed** oven (around $1800) is a similar concept and claims to cook up to 70% faster than a conventional oven. We've yet to put it to the test.

▮ While the above models are microwave combination ovens with extras, **LG**'s latest built-in oven (from around $2000) is a conventional oven but with halogen heating to speed up the cooking.

STEAM

Steam ovens claim to produce healthier food than conventional ovens because fewer nutrients are lost. Our test of the **KLEENMAID** by **BRANDT** steam oven (see CHOICE, November 2003) produced good results, but there are some limitations.

Steam ovens aren't capable of browning foods, so if you don't want pallid meat, you'll need to grill or fry it before or after steaming. And compared to a conventional oven, steam ovens aren't very versatile (and there are cheaper ways of steaming food).

In addition to the **BRANDT**, **BOSCH** and **MIELE** also have models.

▮ Typical prices: $2300–$2800.

If you like the idea of steam but want more versatility you could look out for the combination steam and conventional ovens produced by **ELECTROLUX** ($2335) and **GAGGENAU** (around $8500). And an **AEG** oven with two steam cooking options as well as infrared (halogen light) cooking and conventional baking costs around $5340.

PRE-PROGRAMMED

There are ovens with automatic cooking programs for a multitude of food types, ranging from biscuits to roast chook. You select the type of food and specify the weight, and the oven sets the time, temperature and oven functions needed to cook it. **BOSCH**'s touchscreen control oven (around $4000) has 24 programs plus subcategories; **LG**'s speed-cooking model (around $3000) has up to 40 auto-cook menus.

MORE FOR YOUR MONEY?

Our latest vacuum cleaner test shows that top price doesn't guarantee top performance.

IN A NUTSHELL

Overall the expensive *vacs did about the same job as the mid-priced ones from last year's test. In fact some of the mid-priced models from 2004 outperformed these pricier vacs in areas such as dirt removal and cleaning corners and edges — and cost a lot less.*

The statement 'You get what you pay for' isn't always true, as our most recent assessment of expensive vacuum cleaners shows.

That's not to say you won't get a quality, slick-looking vac with some nifty features if you pay top dollar. However, spending about half the amount can get you a cleaner with many of the same features that'll do the job just as well. In fact, some of the lower-priced vacuum cleaners from August 2004's test lifted dirt more effectively than a few of these more costly models.

We put eight barrel and three upright vacs priced between $599 and $899 through rigorous testing, to find out just how well they did on both carpet and hard floors. We wanted to know if they could get right into those hard-to-get-at corners and edges and under the furniture, or whether they'd miss the tricky bits or put your back out in the process. (For full test details, see the notes far right).

Finally, we tried out any power heads and turbo brushes supplied, to see if these extras really add value or are just superfluous pieces of plastic (see *Power heads/turbo brushes*, right).

All these expensive models were good at cleaning carpets and excellent at cleaning hard floors, which is what you'd expect at this price. But some were let down by other factors — not the least being visible scratches left on polished floors by the two **DYSON**s and the **HOOVER**.

Interestingly, the cleaner that scored the highest overall (85%) was one of the cheapest models in this expensive group — the **MIELE S 726 Cat & Dog 700**

		PERFORMANCE			
Brand / model (in rank order)	Type	1 Overall score (%)	2 Dirt removal score, carpet (%)	3 Dirt removal score, hard floor (%)	4 Scratch te score (%)
MIELE S 726 Cat & Dog 700	Barrel	85	77 / 76 **(A)**	98	100
BOSCH Ergomaxx Pro Hygienic Hepa BSG82077AU	Barrel	84	75	99	100
MIELE S 758 Active HEPA+ Seb 217	Barrel	84	73 / 83 **(B)**	98	100
WERTHEIM 2000P	Barrel	83	73 / 83 **(B)**	99	100
LG Cyking DX V-CA711CEU	Barrel	81	71 / 76 **(A)**	98	100
ELECTROLUX Oxy3System Z06350	Barrel	79	69 **(C)**	97	100
ELECTROLUX Oxy3System Z06330	Barrel	78	71	99	100
BISSELL Lift-Off Bagless 3750-F	Upright	77	74	100	100
DYSON DC08 HEPA+ Turbo Brush	Barrel	76	71 / 64 **(A)**	98	30
DYSON DC07 Brush Control HEPA+	Upright	74	71	98	30
HOOVER Self Propelled Ultra U6445-906	Upright	74	77	99	30

All models have a bag-full indicator, crevice tool, dusting brush and upholstery tool.

* *Prices are recommended retail as at April 2005.*

(A) *The second number shows dirt pick-up using the turbo brush.*

(B) *The second number shows dirt pick-up using the power head.*

(C) *Tested with the power head, as no standard cleaning head is supplied.*

(D) *Not for the upholstery tool.*

(E) *Not for the stair-cleaning tool.*

(F) *5.1 kg for removable barrel cleaner only.*

(G) *Two years on cleaner, five years on motor.*

($599). It was impressive as a dirt remover on carpets, hard floors and in corners and along edges. However, two cleaners tested last year — the **ELECTROLUX Ultra Silencer Z3347.1600W** and the **SAMSUNG SC7060** — scored almost as well (83%) under the same test conditions, and at $200 less, we know which ones we'd be buying.

A vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter is recommended if you suffer from allergies or asthma. The two models that rated equal second, the **BOSCH Ergomaxx Pro Hygienic Hepa BSG82077AU** and the **MIELE 758 Active HEPA+ Seb 217** have one, as do several others — see the table, below, for details.

However, the previously mentioned **ELECTROLUX Ultra Silencer** from our 2004 mid-priced test also has a HEPA filter, so again you don't have to buy an expensive model to get a useful feature.

POWER HEADS/TURBO BRUSHES

Several vacs come with either a power head or turbo brush as an accessory — they're intended to enhance cleaning performance. Both replace the standard head of the cleaner (except in the case of the **ELECTROLUX Oxy3System ZO6350**, where no standard cleaning head is supplied). A power head has an inbuilt motor that operates a brush, whereas a turbo head uses airflow to operate the extra brush.

As in previous tests, the power heads proved fairly effective while the turbo brushes gave only a little improvement or even decreased performance. The table has the scores with and without these attachments.

Careful — some of the upright models tested scratch polished floorboards.

TAMARA GRAHAM

1 Overall score

This is made up of:

- Dirt removal from carpet: 35%
- Dirt removal from hard floor: 21%
- Scratch test (hard floor): 7%
- Cleaning corners and edges: 7%
- Ease of use: 30%

2 Dirt removal from carpet

We embedded 100 g of sand evenly into a section of carpet and vacuumed it to a set pattern and speed. The dirt collected was then weighed and recorded as a percentage of the dirt applied. We did this twice for each model and averaged the results.

While we also tested models with any turbo brush or power head they came with, we rated them for comparison on their most basic and typical vacuum cleaner set-up. We're not convinced you'd want to use the other heads all the time, particularly the relatively ineffective turbo brushes.

3 Dirt removal from hard floors

The same test as for carpet, but using only half the test area and 50 g of sand, spread evenly over a section of medium-density fibreboard. The vacuum cleaner was set to hard-floor setting or a hard-floor tool was used when supplied. The percentage of dirt collected was measured.

4 Scratch test

The cleaner was set to hard-floor setting and run back and forth over a lacquered fibreboard panel 50 times. The floor was then checked for scratch marks.

5 Cleaning corners and edges

Sand was spread into a 90° corner and vacuumed to see how close to a corner each cleaner is able to pick up dirt.

6 Ease of use

This is based on how easy the body of the cleaner is to manoeuvre and how easy it is to move the cleaning head over carpet and under low furniture; how difficult it is to empty and change the dirt collector; the operation of the controls; and how easy the supplied accessories are to use and store. We also considered use on stairs and the location of controls.

7 Noise

Measured at the user's position. Some models have a high-pitched whistle that can be irritating, even though they're no louder than others. See *What to buy* profiles, page 40.

			FEATURES					SPECIFICATIONS						
eaning ers and es score (%)	6 Ease of use score (%)	7 Noise (dB)	Dust collector	Onboard tool storage	Wand suction control	Variable power	HEPA filter	Max. power (W)	Reach (m)	Weight (kg)	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price ($)*
	83	66	Paper bag	✓	✓	✓		1830	9.7	8.1	2	Germany	Miele	599
	83	69	Paper bag	✓		✓	✓	2000	9.4	7.8	2	Germany	Robert Bosch	599
	85	66	Paper bag	✓	✓	✓	✓	1830	9.5	8.7	2	Germany	Miele	899
	83	71	Paper bag	✓		✓		1880	8.6	8.1	2	Italy	Hoover	795
	77	68	Bin	✓	✓	✓	✓	1890	8.8	9.8	2 / 5 **(G)**	Korea	LG	749
	73	61	Paper bag	✓ **(D)**	✓	✓	✓	1600	11.9	9.1	2	Sweden	Electrolux	800
	67	67	Paper bag	✓ **(D)**	✓	✓	✓	1560	11.9	8.3	2	Sweden	Electrolux	599
	63	79	Bin	✓ **(E)**			✓	1380	9.8	10.5 **(F)**	2	Korea	Bissell	699
	83	74	Bin	✓	✓		✓	1400	9.4	8.4	2	Malaysia	Dyson	849
	73	72	Bin	✓			✓	1240	9.0	8.7	2	Malaysia	Dyson	849
	67	80	Paper bag	✓			✓	1330	10.2	9.7	2	ns	Hoover	799

What to buy

Models are profiled in rank order from left to right. Prices are recommended retail as at April 2005.

MIELE S 726 CAT & DOG 700

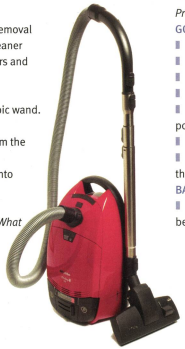
Price: $599

GOOD POINTS

- Equal best for dirt removal (using the standard cleaner head), including corners and edges.
- Very easy to use.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- Variable power
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Easy to fit the bag into the vac.

BAD POINTS

- No HEPA filter (see *What to look for*, below).



BOSCH ERGOMAXX PRO HYGIENIC HEPA BSG82077 AU

Price: $599

GOOD POINTS

- **HEPA** filter.
- Very easy to use.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- Variable power
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Fairly lightweight.
- Easy to fit the bag into the vac.

BAD POINTS

- High-pitched whistle can be irritating.

What to look for

You can't go past a vacuum cleaner that's light, quiet and easy to manoeuvre over both carpet and hard surfaces. A long cord, so you're not forever changing power points, as well as a neat compact design for easy storage, are other bonuses.

Bin and (in particular) cloth dirt collectors are messier and harder to empty, while paper bags are more user-friendly but have ongoing costs and may be something you always forget to buy.

The following features are also useful — see the table, page 38, for which models have them, if it's not stated here:

- **Accessories**: All the tested cleaners come with a crevice nozzle, upholstery tool, a dusting brush and a bag-full indicator.
- **Variable suction/power**: A control on the wand that allows you to vary the suction for more delicate jobs such as cleaning curtains.
- **Blower**: A godsend when it's time to blow up the airbed. None of the expensive models can be adjusted to blow instead of suck, and only one of the mid-price vacs (the **PANASONIC MC-5030**) from our 2004 test came with this facility.
- **HEPA filter**: This stands for high-efficiency particulate air filtration. It's an international standard for filters that trap minute particles. This type of filter can help if you have asthma or a dust allergy or sensitivity, but you have to clean or replace it regularly (about once a year) to ensure it works efficiently. Dyson claim that theirs don't need cleaning or replacement.
- **Adjustable head height**: This feature is available on uprights only. It allows you to adjust the height of the bristles on the cleaning head to the length of the carpet pile. The **BISSELL Lift-Off Bagless** and the **HOOVER Self Propelled Ultra** can be adjusted manually, while the **DYSON DC07** adjusts automatically.
- **Telescopic wand**: This lets you adjust the wand to suit your height, so you shouldn't have to bend your back too much. All the barrel models have one, as does the **BISSELL** upright (see the profile, right).

FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

We assessed how suitable the vacuum cleaners are for someone with a disability, using guidelines supplied by the Independent Living Centre (NSW). None is ideal, but the following four models can be recommended with some reservations:

- The **MIELE S 758 Active HEPA + Seb 217** is easy to move over carpet, has excellent reach and the controls are easy to read and use. It also has an adjustable telescopic wand and an easy-to-throw-out dirt receptacle. But at 8.7 kg it's quite heavy, so it's not great for those with limited strength.
- Others that are also heavy but will appeal to those looking for foot-controlled on/off switches are the **MIELE S 726 Cat & Dog 700** (our top scorer), the **WERTHEIM 2000P** and the **DYSON DC07** for those who want an upright.

MIELE S 758 ACTIVE HEPA+ SEB 217

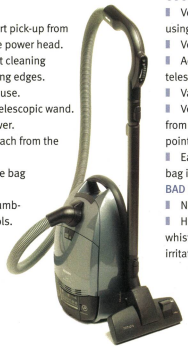
Price: $899

GOOD POINTS

- HEPA filter.
- Very good dirt pick-up from carpet using the power head.
- Equal best at cleaning corners and along edges.
- Very easy to use.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- Variable power.
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Easy to fit the bag into the vac.
- Excellent thumb-operated controls.

BAD POINTS

- Fairly heavy.



WERTHEIM 2000P

Price: $795

GOOD POINTS

- Very good dirt removal on carpet using the power head.
- Very easy to use.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- Variable power.
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Easy to fit the bag into the vac.

BAD POINTS

- No HEPA filter.
- High-pitched whistle can be irritating.

LG CYKING DX V-CA711CEU

Price: $749

GOOD POINTS

- HEPA filter.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- Variable power.
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Easy to remove and replace the bin.
- Excellent thumb-operated controls.

BAD POINTS

- High-pitched whistle can be irritating.
- The heaviest of the models in the *What to buy* list.

PHOTOS: GEOFF AMBLER

IF YOU PREFER AN UPRIGHT MODEL:

BISSELL LIFT-OFF BAGLESS 3750-F

Price: $699

GOOD POINTS

- HEPA filter.
- The only upright not to leave scratches in our hard-floor test.
- Adjustable telescopic wand.
- A detachable barrel cleaner can be removed from the upright's body to be used with attachments for cleaning stairways, car interiors and hard-to-reach areas.
- Very good reach from the power point.
- Easy to remove, replace and clean the bin.

BAD POINTS

- High-pitched whistle can be irritating.
- No onboard storage for the stair-cleaning tool.
- No cord retraction.
- Tiring to manoeuvre and the handle feels heavy with prolonged use.
- As with most uprights, the cleaning head is too high to reach under low furniture easily.
- Heavy.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

- The two **ELECTROLUX** models didn't remove dirt quite as well as the models in the *What to buy* list, and are also a little harder to use. They're not bad vacs but at this end of the market why settle for less than the best?
- The two **DYSON**s (barrel and upright) and the **HOOVER** upright can only be considered for carpet as they left scratches on polished floors. They also scored lower than all the other models for cleaning corners and edges.

Mid-priced models still available from our 2004 test

Brand / model	Price ($)*	Overall score (%)
ELECTROLUX Ultra Silencer Z3347.1600W	399	83
SAMSUNG SC7060	399	83
PANASONIC MC-5030	289	79
HOOVER Windtunnel U5435-906 (upright)	399	76

*Prices are recommended retail as at April 2005.

AUSTRAL IMAGES

Microwaves for a small household

Compact microwaves on test.

IN A NUTSHELL

On test: 11 compact *microwaves with a capacity of around 26 litres.*

The top-rating model *features inverter technology, whose claims of superior cooking performance appear to be backed up by these test results.*

The best of the 11 compact microwaves tested was the **PANASONIC NN-S454WF**, which achieved excellent cooking results. It's the only microwave tested this time that uses inverter technology, where power is supplied continuously at a certain level, rather than just switching on and off throughout the cooking time.

If you're cooking at 'medium', say, with conventional microwave technology you're using full power for 60% of the time and none for the other 40%; with inverter cooking you're using 60% power the whole time. In previous tests of inverter models, though, the results haven't been so outstanding.

If, like most people, you don't want much more from a microwave than to reheat leftovers, defrost frozen food and cook vegies, you'd probably be happy with any of the top seven models (see *Table 1*, page 44). The main failing for most of the microwaves was when reheating solid food that can't be stirred, like lasagne or quiche — there were hotter and cooler spots through them. However, the **PANASONIC NN-S454WF** (discussed above) and the **LG** gave good results for this.

NIGGLES

The main limitation of compact microwaves is the size of crockery or pots they can take: the ones we tested will all take a dinner plate, but you might have trouble with some casserole dishes. Take some large plates or dishes that you use regularly with you when you shop — you might find you need to go up a size, as compact microwaves are aimed at small households, rather than families.

Several of the tested microwaves cost nearly as much to run on standby (plugged into the power but not operating) as they do to reheat a meal once a day; some even cost more — and that's pretty well just to run the clock. It's not much money, but nationwide it's a lot of wasted electricity.

Just so you're not looking for a 'WF' model in a stainless steel finish ...

- The WF in **PANASONIC's** model numbers stands for 'white fascia'.
- The S in **SHARP's** model numbers is for silver; the W is for white.
- The **SAMSUNG MS83HCE** model is white; there's also a silver version, **MS83HCES** (the last S is for 'silver'). The ST in the **M183ST** is for 'stainless steel'.

What to buy

The following three models are the top all-round performers, and there's also a cheap and simple PANASONIC that some people might find worth considering. Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in April 2005.

PANASONIC INVERTER NN-S454WF

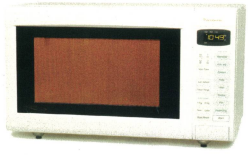
Price: $219

GOOD POINTS

- The best for cooking performance: excellent results in all auto and manual cooking tests. (By 'manual' we mean using no programming or automatic functions: you simply put in the food and set the time.)
- Comprehensive step-by-step instructions including cookbook.
- Lightest in weight.
- Largest turntable.

BAD POINTS

- Digital display is faint
- The most expensive total running costs (although it's also the most powerful on test).



LG MS-2642DP

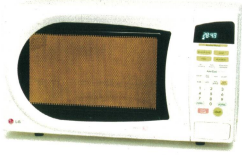
Price: $199

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent auto cooking score and for manual cooking of broccoli and butter cake, and very good for reheating a quiche and defrosting mince. (When we tested according to the instructions we had, it got a poor result for manually defrosting mince. The manufacturer told us its instructions had been updated, and when tested with the new instructions it got a very good score).
- Comprehensive step-by-step instructions including cooking guide and preparation instructions.

BAD POINTS

- None to mention.



SHARP CAROUSEL R-230J(W)

Price: $175

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent score for auto and manual defrosting of chicken and mince, for auto and manual cooking of broccoli and for cooking butter cake.
- The easiest to use.
- Comprehensive step-by-step instructions including menu guide.
- Good visibility through the door.

BAD POINTS

- Comparatively low results for auto reheating of a typical meal and manually reheating a quiche.
- Digital display isn't very bright.

WORTH CONSIDERING ...

If you're after a cheap but basic model, the **PANASONIC NN-MX21WF** could do the trick. It doesn't have any automatic functions, and it has a dial rather than touch controls, but its results for manually cooking were very good overall. And at $146 it's one of the cheapest on test.

PANASONIC NN-MX21WF

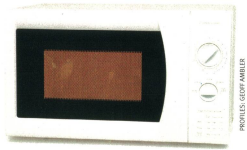
Price: $146

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent results for manually defrosting chicken, cooking broccoli and butter cake and reheating a typical meal.
- Comprehensive step-by-step instructions, including cooking guide.
- The cheapest model tested.
- The lowest total running costs.

BAD POINTS

- The dial control isn't as precise as a touch-control pad.
- No clock.
- There are no automatic cooking functions.
- No child lock.



PROFILES: GEOFF AMBLER

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

- The **NEC N922E** was a good all-round performer — almost as good as the top three. The **PANASONIC NN-MX26WF** and **SHARP Carousel R-290H(S)** scored very well for cooking but were let down by their comparatively low ease of use scores, particularly visibility through the door and of the display. However, you'd probably be happy with all three of these models, especially for a good price.
- The cooking scores for the **SANYO EM-S1563, SAMSUNG M183ST, SAMSUNG MS83HCE** and **NEC N194P** were let down by some low scores for defrosting and reheating.

TABLE 1

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE: 1 Overall score (%)	2 Cooking score (%)	3 Ease of use score (%)	4 FEATURES AND PROGRAMS: Auto cook	Auto reheat	Auto defrost	Sensor cook and reheat	Quick / boosted start	Adjust time during cooking	SPECIFICATIONS: 5 Power output (W, stated / measured)	Measured external dimensions (H x W x D, cm)*
PANASONIC Inverter NN-S454WF	89	97	70	✓	✓	✓				1100 / 1050	30 x 51 x 38
LG MS-2642DP	86	91 **(C)**	74	✓	✓	✓			✓	900 / 800	31 x 51 x 38
SHARP Carousel R-230J(W)	84	87	76	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	800 / 800	28 x 46 x 36
PANASONIC NN-MX21WF **(A)**	81	87	66							800 / 800	28 x 48 x 37
NEC N922E	80	84	70	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	900 / 900	30 x 50 x 38
PANASONIC NN-MX26WF **(A)**	79	87	60	✓	✓	✓				800 / 800	29 x 47 x 37
SHARP Carousel R-290H(S)	79	86	64	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	800 / 750	28 x 46 x 36
SAMSUNG M183ST **(B)**	70	71	66	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ **(D)**	850 / 850	28 x 49 x 39
SANYO EM-S1563	70	71	68	✓	✓	✓				800 / 800	30 x 46 x 36
SAMSUNG MS83HCE	66	65	68	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	850 / 800	28 x 49 x 37
NEC N194P	62	61	64	✓	✓	✓				800 / 800	28 x 46 x 34

What to look for

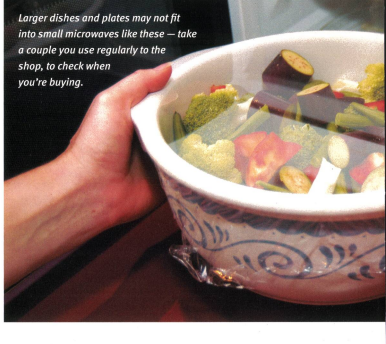
- **The basics:** Easy-to-use controls and instructions, a bright light and large, clear viewing window. Make sure you can fit in your microwave-safe cooking dishes (take dishes you're likely to use to the shop with you). You need about 10 cm of space around the outside of the oven for ventilation, plus up to 20 cm above it.
- **Automatic functions** for defrosting, cooking and reheating may be convenient if you cook foods covered in the programs. Automatic defrost features usually allow you to enter the weight and type of food, and the oven calculates the time.
- **Sensor cooking** is an auto function where the microwave senses humidity in the oven to determine when a food is ready. When we tested large microwaves with this function, the results were excellent; in this test the only microwave with it (the **SAMSUNG MS83HCE**) doesn't have sensor programs for all the foods we were testing, so we couldn't rate it for this feature.
- **Quick/boosted start** is a handy way of starting the oven at 100% power, usually by pressing a single button. With some models you can set the cooking time in one or half-minute increases by pressing the button again.
- **Adjust time during cooking:** Allows you to increase or decrease the time programmed during cooking.
- **Multi-stage programming:** Models with this feature can be programmed to perform a sequence of functions: for example, defrost, cook, then leave to stand. The **NEC** models allow you to program two stages; none of the other models have this feature.
- **Child safety lock:** All models on test except the **SAMSUNG M183ST** and **PANASONIC NN-MX21WF** allow you to push a sequence of buttons to deactivate the microwave.
- **Power:** Generally speaking, the higher the wattage, the faster the food cooks. However, we've found in many tests that the claimed wattage is often different from the actual power output, so don't put too much faith in the numbers. The best advice is to check the food while it's cooking, and use the times quoted only as a guide.

For people with a disability

- For people with weak or arthritic hands, look for a door that's easy to open — the **SHARP Carousel R-230J(W)** and **PANASONIC NN-S454WF** models in the *What to buy* list are good for this, with an easy pushbutton.
- The controls for the **LG** are large and clearly marked, and instructions are easy to understand.
- The **SHARP Carousel R-230J(W)** in the *What to buy* list scored best for visibility through the door.

TABLE 2: COOKING PERFORMANCE

Brand / model (in rank order of Overall score)
PANASONIC Inverter NN-S454WF
LG MS-2642DP
SHARP Carousel R-230J(W)
PANASONIC NN-MX21WF **(A)**
NEC N922E
PANASONIC NN-MX26WF **(A)**
SHARP Carousel R-290H(S)
SAMSUNG M183ST **(B)**
SANYO EM-S1563
SAMSUNG MS83HCE
NEC N194P



Larger dishes and plates may not fit into small microwaves like these — take a couple you use regularly to the shop, to check when you're buying.

sured nal height / able eter (cm)**	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	COSTS 6 10-year running costs ($)†	7 10-year standby energy costs ($)	Price ($)††
35	1	China	Panasonic	46	38	219
33	2 **(E)**	China	LG	34	35	199
30	1	Thailand	Sharp	35	18	175
31	1	China	Panasonic	36	1 **(F)**	146
31	1	China	NEC	35	37	199
31	1	China	Panasonic	37	31	179
30	1	Thailand	Sharp	35	19	252
31	2	Malaysia	Samsung	36	27	199
29	1	China	Sanyo	30	32	149
31	2	Malaysia	Samsung	36	24	169
30	1	Thailand	NEC	33	24	219

* *Depth includes the handle at the front and mouldings at the back, but there are also 'spacers', which prevent you from pushing the back of the microwave right up to the wall. All measures are rounded up to the next centimetre.*

** *Rounded down to the next centimetre.*

† *Rounded to the nearest $1, based on reheating one meal a day for four minutes.*

†† *Recommended retail, based on information provided by manufacturers in April 2005.*

(A) *To be discontinued later this year, but you may still find it in shops.*

(B) *Discontinued, but you may still find it in shops.*

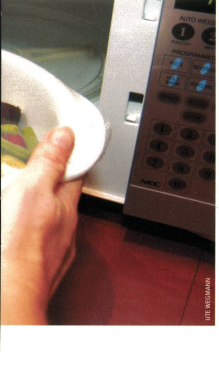
(C) *When we originally tested this model for defrosting mince, the results were poor (40%). The manufacturer told us the instructions had since been updated, so we retested using the new ones. This achieved a better result and is included in the score shown in the table. If you buy this model, note that the old instructions give a time of 7–8 minutes defrosting and the new ones 13–14 minutes.*

(D) *Can only adjust for a longer cooking time.*

(E) *Extra three years on the magnetron.*

(F) *The standby costs are so low because this model has no clock.*

defrost en	Auto defrost mince	Auto cook broccoli	Auto reheat typical meal	Manual defrost chicken	Manual defrost mince	Manual cook broccoli	Manual cook butter cake	Manual reheat typical meal	Manual reheat non-stirrable food
	100	100	100	90	100	100	90	100	93
	100	100	100	80	86 **(C)**	100	100	75	80
	100	100	60	90	100	100	100	75	56
	na	na	na	90	70	100	100	100	62
	74	100	50	90	100	100	100	100	52
	90	100	100	90	78	100	100	60	51
	100	100	60	90	100	100	100	75	46
	52	100	80	60	42	100	90	60	45
	81	na	10	90	95	100	100	75	50
	30	70	na	80	40	100	90	75	52
	50	na	10	80	100	100	90	75	42



LITE WEGRANIN

na *Not applicable — the model doesn't have this function.*

1 Overall score

The overall score is made up as follows:

- Cooking score: 70%
- Ease of use score: 30%

2 Cooking score

Subtotals for manual (where you set the cooking time) and automatic cooking tests were weighted equally to make up the total cooking score. We didn't penalise microwaves that don't offer particular auto functions, as different people may or may not find them useful (use the table to check whether a model has the functions you'd use). Rather, we averaged scores for the tests that could be performed. The **PANASONIC NN-MX21WF** has no auto functions, and was scored only on manual tests.

The tests were as follows (see Table 2 for results):

- Defrost chicken (manual and auto).
- Defrost mince (manual and auto).
- Cook broccoli (manual and auto).
- Reheat meal (manual and auto).
- Cook butter cake (manual only).
- Reheat non-stirrable food (manual only).

We followed manufacturers' instructions where provided, but you may be able to get better results once you get to know your microwave.

3 Ease of use score

This was weighted as follows:

- Ease of using controls: 40%
- Ease of cleaning: 30%
- Visibility during cooking: 30%

4 Features and programs

These are explained in *What to look for*, see far left.

5 Power output

We measured the power output of the ovens to compare with the manufacturer's claimed output. See *What to look for* for the significance of this.

6 10-year running costs

This shows the cost of heating one meal a day for four minutes over 10 years.

7 10-year standby energy costs

This is the cost over 10 years for each microwave on standby (plugged into the power but not operating) — mostly to run the clock. See *Niggles*, page 42.

ACCC CRACKS DOWN ON JUICE MAKERS

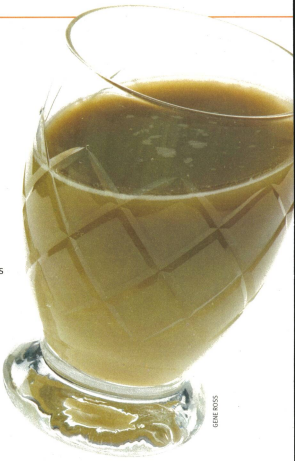
In the December 2004 issue of CHOICE we reported on the rise and rise of juice bars, and raised concerns about claims being made for some of the herbal supplements added to the juices. At the time we wrote to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and since then the ACCC has warned the fruit juice industry, including juice bars, that under Trade Practices legislation it'll be cracking down on misleading claims regarding alleged nutritional, health and therapeutic benefits of certain ingredients.

The ACCC said claims made for some ingredients couldn't be substantiated, and that in some cases could even adversely affect consumers or their diets. See the December issue for more on the herbal supplements and the claims made.

Still regarding the juice market, **BERRI** has agreed to correct claims about three of its juice products, **Green Zone, Kickstart** and **Immune** juice (see *Choice Cuts*, April 2005), after concerns by the ACCC that the composition of the products, including the amount of wheat grass and barley grass in the **Green Zone** juice, was being misrepresented.

The 'shot' of wheat grass in the **Green Zone** juice in fact equates to 1 gram, far short of what the ACCC deems describable as a 'shot'.

BERRI says it will increase the amount of 'green matter' and specify the quantities of it and other herbal supplements in milligrams and volume percentage, "so that consumers will better undertake their own assessment of the potency of each product". But consumers shouldn't have to make their own assessment — if the claims are unsubstantiated or the product doesn't contain enough of the 'magic' ingredients to meet the claims suggested by the product names, we'd think the names are still potentially misleading.



IRENE ROSS

What's in 'seafood extender'?

You've probably eaten it as a seafood stick, or on some seafood pizzas. Seafood extender, or surimi, is a Japanese invention — it's a minced fish product that's used as imitation shellfish such as crab and prawn. It's made by mincing fish and other types of seafood to form a paste and adding other ingredients such as sugar, stabilisers and seasonings before forming it into the desired shape.

AUSTOCK

TRY THIS ONE ON FOR SIZE...

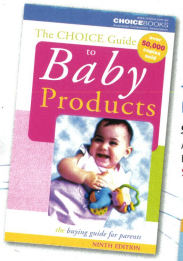
A fast food outlet in the US has on its menu a ¾ pound (around 302 g) Monster Thickburger. Keeping in mind that the recommended daily kilojoule (kJ) intake for women is around 8500 and for men up to 10,000, this one burger contains nearly 6000 kJ — plus 107 g of fat, nearly 46 g of which is saturated. That's about 5½ tablespoons of fat.

Add some of their crispy curl potatoes and a soft drink, and most women would have used up their kilojoule intake for the day in one meal. Pass the defibrillator.

THE CHOICE GUIDE TO KIDS' GAMES

Creative games and activities to keep your three- to six-year-olds entertained.

$22.50 CODE: KGCB2

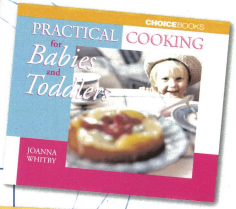


THE CHOICE GUIDE TO BABY PRODUCTS

9th edition

A no-nonsense guide to help parents buy the safest baby products.

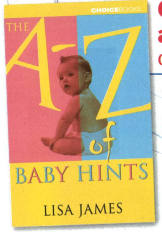
$19.80 CODE: CBP9



PRACTICAL COOKING FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

Over 100 recipes your baby, toddler and whole family can enjoy.

$19.80 CODE: PCFB



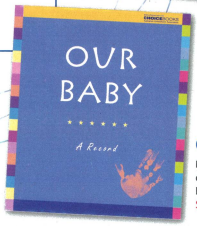
Get the baby bundle with all five books for $93

CODE: BUBB2

THE A–Z OF BABY HINTS

A treasure trove of invaluable hints and tips.

$22.50 CODE: AZBH

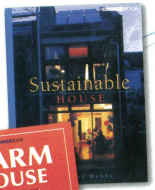


OUR BABY

From birth to three years old, capture all your baby's precious moments.

$19.80 CODE: OURB

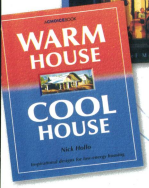
All CHOICE Books are cheaper here than normal retail



SUSTAINABLE HOUSE

Find out how to create a sustainable, environmentally friendly house almost entirely self-sufficient in electricity, water and waste disposal.

$33.75 CODE: SUSH



WARM HOUSE COOL HOUSE

See how clever and attractive design can keep a house cool in summer and warm in winter. Examples come from all over Australia.

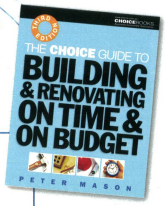
$33.75 CODE: WHCH

THE CHOICE GUIDE TO BUILDING & RENOVATING ON TIME & ON BUDGET

3rd edition

A plain-language guide to directing building or renovating jobs, and employing the right people.

$22.50 CODE: BRT3



Or buy all three for just $80

CODE: HOME2

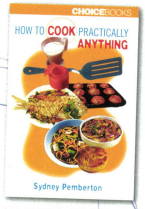
CHOICEBOOKS

THE CHOICE GUIDE TO SAFER PEST CONTROL

3rd edition

Protect your home from common household and garden pests using non-toxic methods.

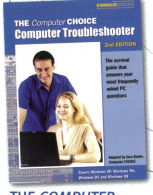
$22.50 CODE: SPC3



HOW TO COOK PRACTICALLY ANYTHING

Tips to turn from a kitchen novice into a confident cook.

$19.80 CODE: COOK


THE Computer CHOICE
Computer Troubleshooter
2nd EDITION
The survival guide that answers your most frequently asked PC questions

THE *COMPUTER* CHOICE COMPUTER TROUBLESHOOTER

2nd edition

Practical advice, tips and shortcuts to help demystify using your computer.

$36.00 CODE: CCTS2

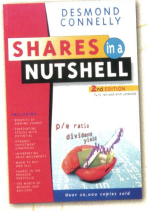
THE CHOICE EVERYDAY INTERNET HANDBOOK

Learn how to use the internet effectively in your everyday life.

$27.00 CODE: EICB

Buy 3 or more books and postage is FREE

OTHER PUBLISHERS' TITLES



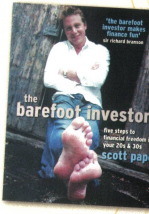
SHARES IN A NUTSHELL

2nd edition

Desmond Connelly

A jargon-free book for people who want to understand shares but have no time to cope with a flood of facts and figures.

$19.95 CODE: SNUT

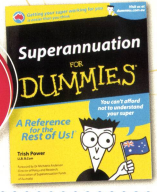

the barefoot investor
"the barefoot investor' makes finance fun" sir richard branson
five steps to financial freedom your 20s & 30s
scott pape

THE BAREFOOT INVESTOR: FIVE STEPS TO FINANCIAL FREEDOM IN YOUR 20s & 30s

Scott Pape

Nifty streetwise ways to help young people quickly achieve the financial goals they set for themselves.

$24.95 CODE: BARE



SUPERANNUATIO FOR DUMMIES

Trish Power

Explains in plain English ho to make your super work for you.

$39.95 CODE: SUPER

Order Form

I enclose ❑ cheque ❑ money order (payable to the Australian Consumers' Association)

or I wish to pay by: ❑ Bankcard ❑ Mastercard ❑ Visa ❑ Amex ❑ Diners Club Expiry ___ / ___

Card number

Name on card

Signature

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss

Address

Postcode

Phone (day) Subscriber no.

Please allow two to three weeks for delivery. If any order can't be filled for a substantial length of time, we'll let you know and give you the option of cancellation.

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION ABN 35 799 246 568 ACN 000 281 925

Code	Title	Qty	Item price	Total price

Postage and handling (waived if buying 3 or more books) $6.00

Total

Send your payment to: Australian Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204 • Phone (02) 9577 3399 • Fax (02) 9577 3355 • Order online at www.choice.com.au.

Money-back guarantee: If you're not completely satisfied with your purchase, return book(s) within 30 days for a full refund of the purchase price.

THIS FORM MAY BE USED AS A TAX INVOICE. **CB/0507**

recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in CHOICE. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: www.recalls.gov.au. If you don't have web access, call the Consumer Safety Unit on (02) 6263 2747.

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

BABY SLEEPING BAG: Living Textiles has recalled **Waffle Weave baby sleeping bags** in the Frangipani, Dragonfly and Treasure ranges. The sleeping bags are white and have either pink frangipani embroidery, green dragonfly embroidery or brown rocking horse embroidery, and have been available in shops since July 2004.
The problem: The zipper and popper button on the sleeping bags may be faulty, and the interfacing inside the sleeping bag may come off and be hazardous if swallowed by a baby.
What to do: Stop using it immediately. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call (02) 9743 5733 (EST business hours) for more information.

CHILDREN'S TOY: Look Sharp Concepts has recalled **Wooden Shapes in Tray**, wooden circles in a tray sold in Crazy Clark's and Go-Lo stores since March 2005, item number 21857, barcode number 9316292218575.
The problem: The size of the puzzle shapes isn't suitable for children under three and they pose a choking risk.
What to do: Remove it from the reach of children. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call Briony Ford on (07) 3860 9710 for more information.

CHILD'S BED: Rubbermaid Group has recalled the **Graco Toddler Bed**, which is white with a guard rail, and was sold at Toys R Us and Bambino Australia between 1997 and 2000.
The problem: Entrapment risks have been found between the slats in the guard rails and the footboard.
What to do: Contact the place of purchase to obtain a free retrofit kit. It includes custom-designed mesh coverings to be attached to the guard rails and footboard to prevent entrapment.

CHILD'S BUNK BED: Sirocco Homewares has recalled the **Sirocco bunk bed**, sold from 1 June 2003 to 30 November 2004 in NSW.
The problem: The bed requires several adjustments including an additional safety rail.
What to do: The manufacturer has told us that all purchasers have been directly contacted. If you have any concerns ring Leon Penrose on (02) 9975 4711.

FOOD: Bi-Lo Supermarkets has recalled **Bi-Lo Shredded Lite Tasty Cheese**, 500 g, with a best-before date of 28/OCT/05 with an APN number of 9310645501512, and sold in Bi-Lo stores in NSW, NT, Queensland, SA and Victoria.
The problem: Some packets have been found to contain fragments of clear plastic.
What to do: Return it to your nearest Bi-Lo store for a refund, or for more information call 1800 061 562.

FOOD: VJ's Seafoods has recalled **Spanish Mackerel Steaks/Cutlets**, random weights of approximately 200 g, purchased on 28 and 29 April 2005 at VJ's Seafoods, Mt Gravatt Plaza in Queensland.
The problem: Eating the fish may cause ciguatera poisoning. Symptoms of ciguatera poisoning include tingling and numbness in finger, toe and mouth areas, burning sensation or skin pain on contact with cold water, joint and muscle pain, weakness or cramps, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea, headaches and fatigue, itchiness and/or difficulty breathing.
What to do: Check your freezer for any affected product, and return it to the place of purchase for a refund. Contact your GP if you have any concerns. For more information call (07) 3343 3748.

COMPUTER BATTERY: Apple has recalled the **lithium ion rechargeable batteries** sold from January 2004 to August 2004 for use with 15 inch PowerBook G4 Aluminium notebook computers. The affected batteries have the model number A1045 and serial numbers that begin with HQ404, HQ405, HQ406, HQ407 and HQ408. The model and serial numbers are on the label on the bottom of the battery and can be viewed by removing the battery from the computer.
The problem: They could overheat and pose a fire hazard.
What to do: Stop using the battery. Contact Apple on 133 622 to arrange to have your battery exchanged.

BICYCLE: Sportz Australasia has recalled **Adams Trail-a-bike**, model names Starter, Folder, Shifter, Original, Deluxe Folder and Ultimate Tandem.
The problem: The vertical and horizontal universal joints may not have been assembled correctly, which may cause the unit to separate from the lead bike, potentially causing injury or death.
What to do: Stop using the bike until it's been inspected. Go to www.trail-a-bike.com for diagrams on how to inspect the bike, or take it to your local bicycle dealer for an inspection and if necessary a free safety upgrade kit. For more information call (03) 9584 5300.

BICYCLE: Apollo Bicycle Company has recalled **2004 LDX 2.2 Mountain Bicycle**, a dual-suspension mountain bicycle made from 2005 T6 aluminium, and sold from September 2003 to November 2004 with a recommended retail price of $699.
The problem: Irregularities in the welding on some bicycles may cause damage at the pivot location, causing the frame to crack.
What to do: Return it to your nearest Apollo dealer for a replacement part to be fitted, free of charge.

WELDING MACHINE: The Lincoln Electric Company has recalled **Invertec V140S Stick & TIG Welding Machine**, part numbers WF200168 and WF200171, sold between 2002 and 2005 with serial numbers below 12050100140.
The problem: There's a risk of electric shock.
What to do: Don't use it until it's been inspected and reworked free of charge. Call 1300 768 720 to find your nearest service facility and arrange repair.

JUMP STARTER: Super Cheap Auto has recalled **Super Force 1900 AMP Jump Start**, model BFP-A-1900.
The problem: There are safety concerns relating to the design of the switch.
What to do: Return the product to your nearest Super Cheap Auto store for a refund, or call (07) 3205 8511 for more information.

CAR: Ateco Automotive has recalled **Alfa Romeo 147 and 166** vehicles.
The problem: A fuel odour or leak may occur when the tank is filled to the maximum level.
What to do: Contact your nearest Alfa Romeo dealer, or call 1800 025 340 for more information.

CAR: Hyundai has recalled **Hyundai XG 2000–2005 models**, VIN range KMHFT41DRYA25290–KMHFU41CR5A992022.
The problem: Brake pipes and/or tubes may have been incorrectly installed, which may result in hydraulic fluid leak and brake failure.
What to do: Contact your nearest Hyundai dealer to arrange rectification.

CAR: Saab has recalled **Saab 9-3 MY01–02 Convertible**, model years from 2001–2002, VIN range 17000001–27018885.
The problem: Fuel pump retaining tabs holding the fuel lines were damaged during the manufacturing process in some affected vehicles, and may result in fuel leakage and a possible fire.
What to do: Contact your nearest Saab dealer to arrange rectification.

CAR: Peugeot has recalled **Peugeot 407**, various VIN ranges.
The problem: A strengthener plate needs to be fitted to the removable towing ring rear support.
What to do: Check with your nearest Peugeot dealer to see if your car is affected and arrange rectification, or go to www.recalls.gov.au for a list of VIN numbers.

CAR: Mitsubishi Motors has extended a recall of **Magna** and **Verada sedan** and **wagon vehicles** that was originally launched in November 2004. The recall now includes TH/TJ series Magna sedans and wagons, and KH/KJ series Verada sedans and wagons manufactured between 28 April 1999 and 21 August 2002, with the following VIN ranges:

Model	VIN range
TH/TJ Magna Sedan	6MMTH5D42XT007624–6MMTJ9S422T049061
TH/TJ Magna Wagon	6MMTH5D46XT008252–6MMTJ9S462T048834
KH/KJ Verada Sedan	6MMKH8H42XT000932–6MMKJ9A422T006644
KH/KJ Verada Wagon	6MMKH8H46XT000927– 6MMKJ9H462T006653

The problem: The engine bay firewall silencer pad may retain moisture, and if it comes in contact with the under-bonnet fuel pipe it may corrode, and a fuel leak may result.
What to do: Affected car owners should receive a letter. For more information call 1300 131 211. Owners who responded to the original recall need take no further action.

aboutchoice

The Australian Consumers' Association is a non-profit, non-party-political organisation, established in 1959 to provide consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances, and to help maintain and enhance their quality of life. It's a Council member of Consumers International.

100% independent. Our income is derived solely from the sale of CHOICE and our other publications and products. All the products we subject to full testing are bought by us in the marketplace; sometimes to get the latest model we may buy directly from a manufacturer where we can select a random sample. We never accept gifts from manufacturers or retailers; we sometimes borrow samples, especially of new products, for quick reviews. We are not beholden to any commercial, government or union interests, and we don't accept advertising.

We test and rate products and services. Our ratings are usually based on quality without regard to price, and are derived from lab tests, expert judgments and reader surveys. If a product is high in quality and relatively low in price, we deem it a Best Buy. A rating applies only to the brand and model tested, not to other models sold under the same brand name, unless so noted.

Representing your interests. We lobby and campaign on behalf of consumers to promote their rights, to influence government policy, and to ensure consumer issues have a high profile in the public arena.

'No commercial use' policy. Our ratings and reports may not be used in advertising or for any other commercial purpose. ACA will take all steps to prevent commercial use of its materials, its name, and the name of CHOICE or its other publications and products. Please report any apparent violation to the Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204; phone (02) 9577 3399; fax (02) 9577 3355; email auconsumer@choice.com.au.

Permissions. Reproduction of CHOICE, CHOICE Books and other CHOICE publications, in whole or in part, is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for commercial purposes). Address requests to CHOICE Consumer Services at the address below.

Your privacy. We're committed to protecting your privacy, and abide by Australia's National Privacy Principles. We never sell or give our mailing lists to other organisations. If you'd like to read our privacy policy, it's on our website or we can send you a copy.

All literary and artistic works and compilations of information are the subject of Australian and international copyright © Australian Consumers' Association 2005. CHOICE® is a trademark of the Australian Consumers' Association. All rights reserved.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Peter Kell. **Executive assistant:** Georgina Saltos. **DEPUTY CEO:** Norm Crothers. **Office administrator:** Sylvia Bone.
CHOICE: Editor Jane Mackenzie. **Acting Editor** Luisa Bustos. **Writers/journalists this issue** Sharon Aris, Birgitt Baader, Karina Bray, Rachel Clemons, Michael Hohl, Kim Laurie, Louise McCabe, Liz Munn, David Oakenfull, Jackie Pearson. **CONTENT GENERATION:** Chris Barnes, Zara Baxter, Rachel Clemons, Michael Hohl, Liz Munn, David Oakenfull, Martha Psiroukis, Chris Ruggles.
CHOICE ONLINE: Manager Linda Magee. Chris Ruggles, Meagan Campbell, Glenn Mason, Amira Meyer.
RESEARCH AND TEST CENTRE: Manager John Ashes. **Laboratory: Manager** Klaus Neuscheler. Jo Bektash, Antonio Bonacruz, Brian Champion, Geoff Day, Peter Horvath, Mohamed Jawahir, Fiona Mair, Neill Patterson, Benjamin Rossetto, Matthew Steen, Petr Valouch. **Buying** Dorothy Kneale, Kate Murdoch. **Research** Christine Shaday, Joe Sydney. **Test Research** John Ashes.
MARKETING AND COMMUNITY: General Manager Mary Harris.
Research Markus Powling, Kai-lin Sze, Nicole Williams. **Marketing** Kellie Thomson, Zac Godkin. **Consumer Services: Manager** Bill Stuart. Lizzie Ball, Rachel Green, Sivana Ristevska, Ailin Sun, Alize Wood.
QUALITY AND IT SYSTEMS: General Manager Barbara Manchester. **Quality control: Manager** Pam Gardiner. **Verifiers** Sharon Cauduro, Frank Donaghy, Corinna Horrigan, Elizabeth Hurtt, Lawson Lobb, Scott O'Keefe, Karen Palmer. **IT: Manager** Stephen Macdonald. Charles Ly. **Subscriptions: Manager** Bill Stuart. **Supervisor** Nostaya Hwang. **Co-ordinator** Thelma Bracken. Lynda-Maree Morgan, Fiona Pollard.
POLICY AND CAMPAIGNS: General manager Gordon Renouf. **Media manager** Lisa Tait. **Policy** Charles Britton, Clare Hughes.
PRODUCTION: Manager Darrell Sly. **Art director** Michelle Havenstein. **Senior designer** Jacqui Fry. **Photographer** Gene Ross.
FINANCE AND PROPERTY: Manager Alan Johnston. **Accounts** Jeanette Dwyer, Kang Zhu Ge, Sera Raicama. **Administration** Jeanette Porter. **Library** Jane Wholohan. **Records management** Shirley Colless.
Marketing statistics by GfK Marketing Services.
Financial information supplied by Cannex.
Services information supplied by ASSIRT Research.

The Australian Consumers' Association is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. ACN 000 281 925. ABN 35 799 246 568.
Registered office 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, Australia.

CHOICE *Health Reader*

Get the latest news and developments in health!

HEALTH READER
Skin
Acne treatments rated
There are hundreds of different acne treatments on the market, but only a few have been shown to be effective. A British study compares them.
The conclusions?
Implications
For reference
YOUR NEXT ISSUE

Edited and compiled by Dr Norman Swan, the award-winning health broadcaster, this handy newsletter covers the big issues in health. Get concise and easy-to-read information on nutrition, exercise, medications, children's health, heart disease and more.

One-year personal subscription is just $55 (10 issues).

To subscribe go to
www.choice.com.au/magazines
or call 1800 069 552 (please quote INS/0507).

index

HOW TO USE THIS INDEX
Bold type indicates a test, survey or trial report, normal type indicates other articles.
* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, letters or recalls. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts and other small pieces.

Acne treatments **Aug**, Jan/Feb*
Air conditioners, split-system, including inverters **Oct**
Airline survey, domestic **Jun**
Appliance reliability **Aug**
Arthritis treatments **Jul**

Baby monitors **Aug**
Barbecues, gas, trolley/portable **Dec**
Batteries, rechargeable, AA **Mar**
Biscuits, shortbread **Jul**
Blood pressure monitors **May**
Bottled water **Jul**
Bra fitting services **Jul**
Breakfast cereals **Mar**
Breakfasts, quick **Sep**
Butter and spreads **Jan/Feb**

Camcorders, digital **Jan/Feb**
Cameras
digital **Oct**, Dec*, **Apr**, Jun*
paper costs, printing photos **Oct**
printer docks **Jun**
Cars
ANCAP crash tests **Oct, Jul**
crash repair costs Jun
hybrid petrol/electric cars Apr
key replacement costs Sep
lemon laws Sep
reader reviews Aug, Mar, Apr
used car safety Dec
waterless car cleaners **Mar**
Cashew nuts **Dec**
Cereals, breakfast **Mar**
Champagne and sparkling wine **Dec**
Child/baby concerns
baby monitors **Aug**
cot, Stokke **Jun, Jul***
cots **Jan/Feb**
dishwater detergent danger Jul
lunches and snacks **Jan/Feb**
strollers, jogger **Jun**
tipping stove Nov, Jan/Feb*
Cleaners
car, waterless **Mar**
laundry detergents **May**, Jul*
mitts **Apr**
multipurpose **Oct**
steam **Apr**
Clothes dryers **Apr**, Jun*
Cockroach killers **Dec**
Coffee
chains (coffee and cakes) **May**
espresso machines **Aug**
grinders **Aug**
Convection heaters **Jun**
Cooktops, buying guide Oct
Cordless drills, cheap **Apr**
Cordless phones **Apr**
Cots
Stokke **Jun**, Jul*
test **Jan/Feb**

Detergents, laundry **May**, Jul*
Digital camcorders **Jan/Feb**
Digital cameras **Oct**, Dec*, **Apr**, Jun*
Dishwasher detergent danger Jul
Dishwashers **Jan/Feb, Jul**
Doors, security screen Mar
Drills, cheap cordless **Apr**
Dryers, clothes **Apr**, Jun*

Eggs **Sep**
Electric shavers **Nov**, Jan/Feb*
Electric toothbrushes **Sep**
Electricity, costs and supply Mar
Energy labelling Sep
Espresso machines **Aug**

Flooring guide, timber Dec
Food
biscuits, shortbread **Jul**
breakfast cereals **Mar**
breakfasts, quick **Sep**
butter and spreads **Jan/Feb**
children's lunches and snacks **Jan/Feb**
coffee shop chains **May**
eggs **Sep**
folate Nov
honey **May**
juice bars Dec
labelling, marketing Jul
labelling, quality descriptors Nov
nuts, cashews and mixed **Dec**
olive oil **Aug**
organic processed foods Oct
spaghetti **Jun**
spreads and butter **Jan/Feb**
storage, disposable **Jan/Feb**
trans fat **Apr**
water, bottled **Jul**
Folate, eating enough Nov
Fridges, energy-efficient, mixed sizes **Nov, May**, Jun*
Frypans, non-stick **Nov**

Glamour photography Apr
Glucosamine **Jul**
Greywater, reusing Nov, Mar*

Health
acne treatments Aug
arthritis treatments **Jul**
blood pressure monitors **May**
glucosamine **Jul**
hospital insurance **Sep**
magnet therapy Sep
multivitamins Jun
pedometers **Oct**, Dec*
St John's wort May
Heaters
convection, electric **Jun**
outdoor, gas **Mar**, Jun*
Home theatre systems **Dec**
Home warranty insurance Aug
Honey **May**
Hospital insurance **Sep**, May*
Hybrid (petrol/electric) cars Apr

Index, four-year Jun
Indoor paint **Dec**
Insurance
home warranty Aug
hospital **Sep**, May*
travel **Dec**
Internet/phone/TV packages Aug
Internet, wireless Nov

Jogger strollers **Jun**
Juice bars Dec

Labelling
energy Sep
food Nov, Jul
Laundry detergents **May**, Jul*
Lawnmowers, battery and electric **Nov**
Lemon laws (cars) Sep

Magnet therapy Sep
Mattresses, buying guide Oct
Microwaves **Jul**
Mitts, cleaning **Apr**
Mixed nuts **Dec**
Mobile phones, GSM **Jan/Feb, Jun**
Monitors, baby **Aug**
Multifunction printers **May**
Multipurpose cleaners **Oct**
Multivitamins Jun

Non-stick frypans **Nov**
Nuts, cashews and mixed **Dec**

Olive oil **Aug**
Organic processed foods Oct
Osteoarthritis treatments **Jul**
Outdoor gas heaters **Mar**
Ovens, buying guide Jul

Paint, indoor **Dec**
Paper costs, printing photos **Oct**
Pay TV Mar
Pedometers **Oct**, Dec*
Pharmacies, advice given **Sep**, May*
Phone/internet/TV packages Aug
Phones
cordless **Apr**
mobile — see Mobile phones
phoning home from overseas Sep, Dec*
VoIP calls Apr
Photography, glamour Apr
Pool fences **Sep**
Printer docks for digital cameras **Jun**
Printers, multifunction **May**

Rainwater tanks Nov, Mar*
Rangehoods **Jun**
Rechargeable batteries, AA **Mar**
Refrigerators — see Fridges
Reliability, appliances **Aug**
Rice cookers **Mar**

Security screen doors Mar
Shavers, electric **Nov**, Jan/Feb*
Shortbread biscuits **Jul**
Snacks for children **Jan/Feb**
Spaghetti **Jun**
Sparkling wine and champagne **Dec**
Spreads and butter **Jan/Feb**
St John's wort May
Steam cleaners **Apr**
Storage, food, disposable **Jan/Feb**
Stove, tipping Nov, Jan/Feb*
Strollers, jogger **Jun**

Telephones — see Phones
Television
51 cm **May**
76 cm, widescreen **Oct**, Jan/Feb*
pay TV Mar
toppling TVs Oct, Mar*
Timber flooring guide Dec
Toothbrushes, electric **Sep**
Toothpaste, whitening **Jan/Feb**
Trans fat **Apr**
Travel insurance **Dec**
TV/phone/internet packages Aug

Vacuum cleaners **Aug, Jul**
Video equipment, home theatre systems **Dec**
VoIP phone calls Apr

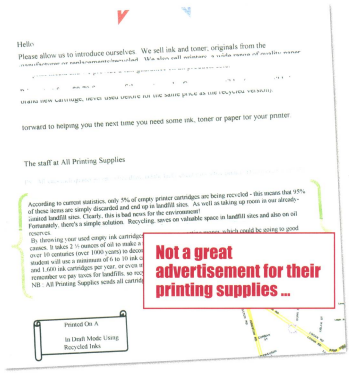
Washer-dryers **Mar**, Apr*
Washing machines **Sep**, Oct*, Jan/Feb*
Washing powder **May**
Water
bottled **Jul**
greywater, reusing Nov, Mar*
rainwater tanks Nov, Mar*
Waterless car cleaners **Mar**
Whitening toothpaste **Jan/Feb**
Wine, sparkling and champagne **Dec**
Wireless internet Nov

COUNCIL MEMBERS

The **Australian Consumers' Association** is governed by an honorary council elected by the voting members. (For information about voting membership, call (02) 9577 3399.) Members of the council give their time without reimbursement, and are not engaged as principals in industry, advertising or sales.

COUNCIL: Chair: Chris Field. **Deputy Chair:** Debra Harker. **Members:** Allan Barton, Robin Brown, Cynthia Cliff, Dr Ken Harvey, Dianne Hill, Jenni Mack, Phil Marchionni, Joan Staples, John T D Wood.

hardword


Hello

Please allow us to introduce ourselves. We sell ink and toner, originals from the manufacturer or replacements/recycled. We also sell printer, a wide range of quality paper

during new cartridge, never used printer for the same price as the recycled version).

forward to helping you the next time you need some ink, toner or paper for your printer.

The staff at All Printing Supplies

According to current statistics, only 5% of empty printer cartridges are being recycled - this means that 95% of these items are simply discarded and end up in landfill sites. As well as taking up room in our already-limited landfill sites. Clearly, this is bad news for the environment!

Fortunately, there's a simple solution. Recycling, saves on valuable space in landfill sites and also on oil reserves.

By throwing your used empty ink cartridge

cranes. It takes 2 ½ ounces of oil to make a

over 10 centuries (over 1000 years) to decor

student will use a minimum of 6 to 10 ink c

and 1,600 ink cartridges per year, or even

remember we pay taxes for landfills, so rec

NB : All Printing Supplies sends all cartrid

Printed On A

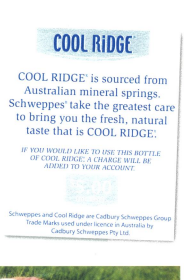
In Draft Mode Using

Recycled Inks

Not a great advertisement for their printing supplies ...

Don't think too loud ...

Our reader managed to escape his hotel without having to pay for this bottle of water in his room, despite the fact that he would indeed have *liked* to use it. While he didn't *actually* use it, having first spotted the fine print, he was very much hoping that the thought police weren't already onto him.


COOL RIDGE
COOL RIDGE® is sourced from Australian mineral springs. Schweppes® take the greatest care to bring you the fresh, natural taste that is COOL RIDGE®.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE THIS BOTTLE OF COOL RIDGE, A CHARGE WILL BE ADDED TO YOUR ACCOUNT.
Schweppes and Cool Ridge are Cadbury Schweppes Group Trade Marks used under licence in Australia by Cadbury Schweppes Pty Ltd.

Do your bit for the environment - pull on a pair of gloves and get involved in helping to clean up our beaches and streets on Clean Up Australia Day!

LOVE THOSE GLOVES!

Newborn 3 piece Beanie/zip top and pants Grey. 000-2.

$24.74

Save $8.25

CHILD PRODIGY?

At first glance this "newborn" looks a little advanced for their age. Upon closer reading it seems Target classifies infants up to two years as newborns.

Roll-A-Putt

67cm wide, true surface with grip backing. Just cut a hole at one end. Ideal for practicing your putting. Hole not included. F/L6620402

$13.84

Per Linear Metre

Apparently holes were out of stock ...

Is it "original" *or* "new improved"?

You can't have it both ways.

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HELP?

The prize for the best entry goes to G Grinton. Thanks also to J Cody, H McDonald, M Collins, K Horrigan, M Brodie, J Schindler, R Davis, M Hay and R Taylor for their contributions to this month's *Hard Word*. Please keep them coming.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204. Please don't email us your entries — we need the originals.